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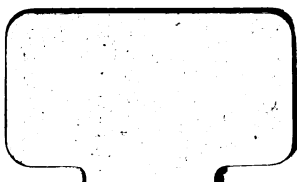
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A NOVEL

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY

AUTHOR OF 'THE HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS' ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES

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CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE HOUSE OF RHYADER AND FESTINIOG	1
II. THE RETURN TO THE WORLD	27
III. MRS. ARNAUD	32
IV. MRS. ARNAUD'S DEFIANCE	43
V. MORE OF THE FIRST NIGHT	54
VI. HELOISE	60
VII. OPENING DAY	70
VIII. JAMES AND GEORGE DRUMMOND	91
IX. FESTINIOG AND RHYADER	99
X. LORD FESTINIOG AND MRS. ARNAUD	106
XI. MADAME	115

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. BARRI	128
XIII. A FAMILY CONSULTATION	137
XIV. DRUMMOND THE ELDER	149
XV. MOVEMENTS AT NUMBER SEVENTEEN	163
XVI. THE MYSTERY OF D'ARCY AND HELOISE	184
XVII. GEORGE DRUMMOND TAKES CHARGE OF BARRI	197
XVIII. TUTOR AND PUPIL	212
XIX. CONFIDENCE BETWEEN MRS. ARNAUD AND GEORGE DRUMMOND	221
XX. MRS. ARNAUD TELLS A LIE TO DRUMMOND.	227

NUMBER SEVENTEEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE OF RHYADER AND FESTINIOG.

THE two sons of the old house of Rhyader developed singularly different dispositions, though both gave great cause of anxiety to their father, at one time. Scarcely divided by one year in age, they were as distant as the poles, both in pursuits and in character. Gervase the elder, began life as a solemn and pensive baby, who at his christening attended cautiously to the ceremony, as if to see that it was correctly done in every particular. Shortly afterwards he became

a precocious boy, and wrote some admirable poetry. Not long afterwards he became a precocious young man, with all the learning of the Egyptians at his fingers' ends. He was a young gentleman of great promise, and although his performances never came up to his promises, he was an all too excellent young gentleman. His inexorable virtues led him at one time it was suspected Romewards, but he never went; he never did anything incautious.

Iltyd the younger son, was, on the other hand, a violent baby, a violent, and as some said, a stupid boy, and a most headstrong young man. The mother died not long after Iltyd had attained his tenth year, leaving the head of the house a widower; and after that event no one could do anything with the younger son, save his father and his brother. To these two people, and

to these alone (save possibly the colonel of his regiment when he chose), would he listen. The father and brother, who were both crazy about their pedigree, were proud of him. The father would say: 'He is a real De Barri, the inexorable spirit of Giraldus Cambrensis is alive in *him*;' and the brother would say, 'It is true; he may do us honour in war; it is a pity we ever took the name of Arnaud, and allowed the Irish Barrys to usurp our real honours.'

Iltyd Gerald Baldwin Arnaud, christened carefully after the Saint, the Archdeacon and the Archbishop, cast the traditions of his family to the winds, and voted Giraldus Cambrensis the greatest bore of all the Barris. The great Rhys he pronounced to be a noodle, inasmuch as he could not keep his own kingdom; and he very much affected the company of one Halfacre a

groom, who, he declared, was a descendant of Halfager, and consequently a prince in disguise. Iltyd was sent into the army very young, and was a most excellent young officer, though he got into early trouble by incontinence of speech. The colonel of his regiment having incautiously remarked that his family had come over with the Conqueror, Iltyd said, 'You pack of rascals were a little too late, we came over with the FitzGerald's in the time of Edward the Confessor.' He was a foolish young man, and was rebuked most properly. He would laugh at his own pedigree, but only in his own family.

As the brothers Gervase and Iltyd grew to manhood, one seemed to give to the other what was wanted by each. Gervase over-read himself, and pushed his religion to the verge of extreme asceticism; Iltyd, on the

other hand, would come home on leave from his regiment and tear Gervase from his study, carrying him over hill, moor, and torrent, up to some nook among the wild Welsh mountains, where they could hear no sound save the distant trickling of waters. Then Iltyd would tell Gervase all about the strange magnificence of London and Paris : and how he, whose short curls were now lying on his brother's shoulder, had yesterday been at court ; and how the pale man that he had been trying to describe was the Emperor, and the boy was the Prince of Wales, and so on ; trying to fix the colours and forms of a kaleidoscope to suit the eye of his brother, to whom, at this time, all these people were mere names.

Then they would wander down to the old priory in the hollow, so dearly beloved by the greatest of their family, and among

the shattered Norman and early English arches, Gervase would talk about the crusade preached by Giraldus Cambrensis and Baldwin in that spot, until Iltyd would catch his enthusiasm, and believe that the campaign which was now imminent was, in reality, another crusade to snatch the holy places from the hands of an alien and, in reality, barbarous power. Then they would go back to the castle, and their father would say, as he saw them coming home arm in arm, 'nothing will separate those two, *except a woman.*'

The war came, blazed up, burnt low, blazed up again, and then died out. Iltyd was all through it and behaved with credit and distinction: he came home a captain, but, being in the Guards, with, of course, the title of colonel. But meanwhile something had happened to the branch of the Barri

family which had never been calculated on for a moment.

The head of the Festiniog family lost his eldest son by typhoid fever, and before he had time to reflect on the matter, news came that his last surviving son was killed in the trenches. The head of the Rhyaders, the father of our two young gentlemen, at once went to give such consolation to his cousin as he could; and he urged him strongly to marry again. The old man, with the obstinacy of the Rhys family crossed through endless generations with that of the De Barris, had a will of his own. He said that the hand of God was in it, that the Festiniog estates must join those of Rhyader, and that the latter house had two noble sons to represent the allied families. Instead of marrying, he made his will, and by no means too soon, for he died very shortly afterwards,

leaving, out of his personal property, seven thousand pounds to Iltyd, as a memorial of his gallantry in war.

The Rhyaders therefore from being merely as the Irish say 'decent' people, that is to say very rich, became immensely so. Rhyader took the title of Festiniog, and became a pillar of the State.

The Romish tendencies of Gervase, the elder of the two sons, gave the most dreadful trouble to his father. The entailed estates of the two branches of the family would most certainly come to Gervase.

Gervase (as was said by his friends) was actually thinking of joining the Roman priesthood, and openly talking about it. Had he done so, a large part of the vast revenues which had come to the Rhyader branch of the family would flow into the coffers of the Papacy. Llanavon would be

restored, and monks would walk about among the violent Welsh dissenters to be stoned : to the new Lord Festiniog such a state of things appeared most horrible, for he was one of the most extreme of all Protestants. Yet he was afraid of his son, and he did not know what to do. He, in the end, had to do nothing at all ; affairs arranged themselves for him. Gervase with his new honours fresh upon him went to a ball at Powys Castle, to look, they said, for the last time, on the frivolities of this wicked world. Like many holy men, including Richelieu, he was an admirable dancer, and he danced that night so often with only one young lady, that the county raised their eyebrows, and listened to such of the conversation as they could hear, between the Festiniog heir and Miss Ormerod, as hard as they could. In the interval of the dances they seemed to

talk about nothing but religious matters, and the noise went abroad that Miss Ormerod was going to take the veil when Gervase took the cowl.

Such was by no means the fact. Gervase had fallen in love with Alice Ormerod, the moment he saw her. She was so exceedingly beautiful and charming that there would have been no wonder in the matter at all, had it not been put about that Gervase had not only devoted his life to the secular Roman priesthood but even to the regular; the reality being that he was nothing more than a very high churchman for those times, and had a peculiar and very strong antipathy to the Papacy.

Miss Ormerod held similar views, and to the great delight of her father-in-law very soon became the wife of Gervase.

Twelve months had not passed before

she had an heir to the combined estates of Festiniog and Rhyader ; but twelve months more had not passed before she was a hopeless, childless cripple, and active life was over for her in this world. Driving down one of the mountainous lanes near Llanavon, the pony took fright and became unmanageable. The nurse and child were thrown against a stone wall and killed ; and Lady Rhyader, after trembling for a year between this world and the next, became an apparently hopeless invalid.

If Gervase had loved her before, he adored her now. The year during which he had dreaded to lose her had only rendered her more precious. The eight years which followed on that year, had rendered her more precious still. Gervase Arnaud thought that he had made his mind up on every subject save one ; and on that one

point he could get no information whatever. His wife and he had every thought, every sentiment, every hope in common; but he wanted to know if there was any chance of their meeting after death. Rome said no, save under certain conditions, to which he would not submit. The Anglicans said, very properly, that they could not tell him. Neither the Irvingites nor the Swedenborgians satisfied him. A keen, shrewd man enough in most things, he had cast his lot in with one woman, and made himself foolish about her. The High Church people declined most properly to tell him more than they knew, and he went elsewhere. The last people he tried were the Moravians; they told him that if he thought so much of his wife he was unfit for bliss. In short, he could get no satisfaction at all on the subject of his meeting his wife in a

future state. Spiritualism was not then, or he might have taken to *that*. After eight years it would have taken a Mosheim to say of what heresy he was innocent.

Possibly of none; any man who studies theology is the heretic of half an hour. A man who does not assimilate the various heresies one by one, wants genius, and is no true theologian. Gervase was a postulant to every heresy in ecclesiastical history for some time, but he came back to the high church party after all.

His father, Lord Festiniog, had gone to Rome, and had written from there that he wished to see him. At this time his wife, Lady Rhyader, for the second title of Festiniog was the same as their old one, was hopeless. She was moved from the sofa to her bed, and back again. He left her in the most reluctant manner, for she had

not stood upright for seven years. He saw his father at Rome, and then came back to Llanavon, after an absence of six weeks.

There had been a silence as regards letters between them, which will be explained immediately. He thought from this that she might be worse; that she could write to him no longer. He got no word from her at all; he dared not go to his own home at Llanavon, for the servants might tell him she was dead.

He got out of the train at Llanganfraid and went across the mountains. After a long walk he came in sight of the castle, and everything seemed as usual. He looked on the terrace, and he saw her invalid chair there, with the rugs and shawls upon it, but it was empty.

He did not know what to think. He dashed from rock to rock. Space and time

seemed to be annihilated. Here was the chair in which he had left her, a hopeless invalid; here was her fan, here were the letters from her friends strewed around; here were the prints of her sacred feet on the cushion, but where was she?

‘Alice! Alice!’ he called aloud, ‘where are you?’

‘Gervase! Gervase!’ answered a clear strong voice from the shrubbery close by. ‘I am here; come to me, darling.’

He ran into the thicket close by, and there was his wife, more beautiful than ever. She told him the truth at once.

‘First I found that I could stand, and then I found that I could walk; but I thought that I would say nothing about it to any one. I should not even have told you, had you not surprised me in this way; during the last fortnight I must have walked miles.’

‘But have you never asked Doctor W——’ said Gervase.

‘No! I do not think he knows his business at all. I shall be able to walk with you again now; I shall soon get stronger I am sure. We can go over the hills together as of old. We shall be together as we once hoped to be.’

It now becomes necessary to leave Gervase in his new honeymoon, and follow Iltyd. The fact must be told at once; after the war he had done little good for himself or others. He had very nearly quarrelled with his father and his brother and was in their bad books. He had lost some money at horse-racing, a thing which has been done before. He had also run away with a young milliner from the West-end, which was bad; and was reported to have married her at the consulate at Leghorn,

•

which was considered in certain circles to be worse. After having fulfilled the catalogue of his crimes he died. Some people were very sorry for him, the commander-in-chief was, his father was; while his brother Gervase would have given half his income to get him back again; but unfortunately he was dead, and so sorrow was not of the least avail; no more in short than it would be in your case or in our own.

The sorrow of two people only took practical results. Lord Festiniog held consultation with his son Gervase. They determined that 'the woman' and her child just born should not suffer, in a pecuniary point of view.

This determination was made just after the birth of Gervase's first child; before the accident which made the now great house heirless. It was persevered in, most faith-

fully as far as 'the woman' was concerned for many years, until after the time when Gervase's second child, the one born after his wife's recovery, was a boy of fourteen.

The poor woman had from the first accepted her position most humbly: she thanked Lord Festiniog and Lord Rhyader most heartily for their assistance, pointed out frankly to the family that she had six thousand pounds left her by her husband, and needed nothing except the future help of the family for the education of her little boy. Every promise was given, and of course no objection was made to her request to live abroad at Leghorn, near the grave of Iltud; it was the best for all parties. No objection was made either to her supplementing her income by her trade: in fact, they never knew that she was doing so.

She lived in great retirement with her

child in Leghorn, and she was more than once seen there by the family solicitor, young Mr. Drummond, who generally spent part of the long vacation there. He gave the most excellent account of her beauty, her character, and her accomplishments, and spoke so much about her, that one day Lord Festiniog turned from some papers which he was examining, and said :—

‘ Drummond, if you have really any honourable intentions towards the poor woman, tell me so. Our family have done her the most irreparable wrong; if you think of marrying her, I will most certainly make her a very handsome settlement.’

‘ My lord,’ he replied, ‘ there are insuperable objections.’

‘ Nonsense, man, none but what may be got over with time.’

‘ I mean on my side, my lord.’

‘ Pray forgive me ; I ought not to have mentioned the subject ; only you spoke of her with such enthusiasm and admiration, that you cannot blame me.’

‘ I do not my lord, but the strict truth is that before I knew my own mind I formed other ties.’

‘ I never heard of that.’

‘ Nor do I wish others to do so. I only mentioned the fact to account for my conduct.’

‘ Then it is your duty surely to keep away from her, is it not ? ’

‘ I assure you that there is not any danger, less than you could possibly dream of. Mrs. Arnaud, as she calls herself, is my friend, but she never could be anything more.’

Lord Festiniog pretended to be satisfied, but he was very far from being so. He put

the matter aside as being no particular business of his, though he thought that the cool Drummond was one of the last men to make a foolish and clandestine marriage. Still he reflected that if one half of the world knew half of the follies committed by the other half, society would become impossible.

Drummond saw Mrs. Arnaud every summer for some years, and did her many little services. One summer when he went, he found that she was at Ravenna, and followed her there, only to find her startlingly ill in a rather secluded lodging by the sea. She explained to him that she had only come there for the boy's sake, for that he wanted a little change, and her servant had told her that Ravenna was particularly healthy. 'The woman had been born there,' she said.

Drummond was very angry and loud

about the matter. 'The woman wants to come here after her people, I suppose—confound her. It is one of the worst fever holes in Europe. You should come away at once.'

'I should like to do so I am sure,' she said; 'but I feel too ill to move.' And indeed she seemed so. Drummond went away after her servant, and came back telling her that he had scolded the woman, that she was going to be ill, and that there was no danger.

It appears that the woman deceived them on that point; Mrs. Arnaud was very ill indeed, and Drummond was evidently terrified. The woman Carlina told him that she would be delirious for a few days. She became so, and sunk into a lethargy; once she seemed so nearly gone that he said to Carlina, in a way very different from his

ordinary business one, 'if she dies, I will kill you.'

She did not die, she lingered on into a slow return to consciousness. She asked for her child, but she was told that it was dangerous for him to come near her. The necessity for breaking the truth to her came at last. The child had caught the fever from her and had died.

She relapsed into delirium, and imbecility for a time. The first day she was in good health enough to travel she insisted on going straight to England as soon as she had put a stone on the grave of the boy. She was perfectly resolute about it, though Drummond rather urged her not to undertake the journey. Nothing could turn her, and to England she came in his company; and went straight to Lord Festiniog, asking his protection: he saw no reason why he

should not grant it, and so gave his consent, which was by no means necessary, to her entering a society of religious ladies which had become known to his eccentric son in one of his religious experiments. Here she lived for some years unmolested, and almost happy. Her dead child was always before her certainly : but he was in heaven, so she thought how wicked it was for her to mourn for him. He could not always have been a child, but must have grown to be a man. And although her husband Iltyd was a saint, still all men were not satisfactory. He might have grown into a Drummond, and that would not have pleased her, kind as he was.

Lord Rhyader and his very charming wife frequently saw her ; her guilt was so apparently innocent that they thought of it very little. Once Lord Rhyader, in one of

his religious moods, spoke to her about it, and expressed himself glad to see how entirely she had repented.

‘My guilt!’ she said; ‘I am not guilty. My poor Saint, Iltyd, made a most innocent mistake. That is all. ‘You must not use that word again to me, my lord;’ and she rose and looked at him in a way he did not like.

‘Come,’ he said, ‘do not call me my lord, call me Gervase: do not let us quarrel. Are you happy here?’

‘Yes. I shall go into the world no more, I think. My mother, and the rest of my relations left me soon after.—Well you know what I mean.’

‘So I understood,’ said Lord Rhyader. ‘You have, I suppose, given the money you have to the sisterhood. Not that I am likely to care about it, but if you have made

any deed of gift in this direction, you might feel yourself, as it were, bound to stay here. If you desire to go once more into the world, I assure you that we will take the greatest care that you have ample means: even in case of your marrying again.'

'That is very nobly said, Gervase,' she replied; 'but I have kept what money I have entirely in my own hands.'

'Then you will not be beholden to us in any way?'

'If it becomes necessary, yes; at present, no.' And on these terms they remained.

Her money was part of it laid out in mortgage, and one of her mortgagers died. Her lawyer who had been her husband's, was no other than her old friend Drummond. It was necessary that she should go to London and see him.

CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN TO THE WORLD.

YEARS had passed since she had seen Drummond, and years had passed since she had been in London. She had heard from him formally many times, and on one or two occasions confidentially. But as far as she was concerned he belonged to the past, and she supposed that he had entirely forgotten the passion which he had once undoubtedly entertained for her.

She approached his office with a feeling of curiosity. What was he like now? She thought he was a handsome fellow once, though never comparable to Iltyd. 'How-

ever, he played the villain to me ; he pestered me with his attentions, and I only found out from Lord Festiniog that he was married all the time. If my lord knew that, what a rage he would be in ; I will never tell the truth about that, for the man was very kind to me when my boy died. He was very agreeable, and I think that I could have trusted him once, I certainly cannot now.'

She went into his front office in Westminster, and sent in her name. No client was with him, and she was asked in at once. She passed into the room a handsome woman of less than forty ; she came out, the clerks noticed, looking much older.

He was little altered, as she saw at once when he rose to receive her. He held out his hand and said 'Mary,' but she replied, 'Mrs. Arnaud, if you please.' The clerks heard no

more. What passed between them is a mere matter of detail: no one knew in fact until long afterwards.

Her last words, however, as she was leaving, were perfectly audible. 'You are certainly right and I see it now. I thank you, though I never can reward you in the way you desire. You have done Iltyd's memory a great service. Could he know of it he would thank you as deeply as I do. I will vindicate his memory in my own way. Meanwhile, I will entirely keep your counsel for the sake of old times. Depend completely on that.'

Mrs. Arnaud never went back to the religious house where she had lived so happily. She stayed in London, and entered into a long and acrimonious correspondence with Lord Festiniog. They both lost their tempers over the matter, and at last he said

that she might carry out her threat and go to anywhere her own way.

She did so, and from this moment our story as regards her really begins. She was determined to live without the countenance of the family any longer. She will explain her reasons herself hereafter.

She consulted Drummond as to the best way of doing so. He at once told her of an excellent investment at No. 17 Hartley Street, Cavendish Square. It was a fashionable milliner's business which she could conduct herself most perfectly, and which was for sale by private contract. He had known of the fact through his own son being a lodger in the house.

‘Your son,’ she said.

‘Yes,’ he said ; ‘I have not brought him up to the law. He is in the Home office ; a poor appointment as yet. You have heard surely how painful my married life was ?’

‘ Yes, Lord Festiniog told me some of it.’

‘ Well, I love the young man and he is devoted to me, but he has at times a look so fearfully like his mother that I dread to look at him. I could not have him sitting opposite me in the office all day, and every day. I should never forget the past. You can understand *that*, my dear Mrs. Arnaud.

‘ Well indeed,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘ the past has not been very happy for either of us. You, however, have had most to bear. I earnestly hope, Mr. Drummond, that the presence of your son in my house will not cause us to meet oftener than courtesy permits.

‘ You persist in your difficult resolution.’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Well, do not mention my name.’

‘ I will certainly not do so.’

And so Mrs. Arnaud began life once more on her own account.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. ARNAUD.

To be entirely alone in a strange house, after making a great resolution and carrying it out to the end : after doing a thing which was terrifying to think of before it was done, and when accomplished was more fearful still ; was not by any means a reassuring position. Mrs. Arnaud felt that, as she sat down in her little dark back parlour, and thought of the past and of the future. She had taken the great step of her life, and was by herself, for the first time, face to face with facts.

She was at this time about forty, looking about five and twenty : complexion and

features were still perfect, and her vast mass of dark hair, gathered behind and falling in a large curl over her left shoulder, was untouched with grey : she wore over it a small lace cap ; from the throat downwards fell a long white shawl of the same material, and her gown was of dark purple silk. Possibly there was not in the West End of London that summer's evening a handsomer or more perfectly dressed woman than Mrs. Arnaud, of No. 17 Hartley Street, Cavendish Square, milliner and dressmaker.

She had come back at last to her old trade, which had been her mother's before her. After many years' seclusion as a religious lady, she had once more thrust herself before the public in fulfilment of a certain threat, and she was utterly alone in her terror : she had sent out her maid Rachel, and there was no movement in the

house except the ticking of the French clock on the mantel-piece. She opened the door leading to the shop and looked in: it was nearly dark, for the shutters were up, but was set out ready for the morrow, when she would open it. It was full of ghostly female figures, in splendid dim-seen raiment, but without heads. Two of them nearest the window, in her sickly fancy, seemed like Marie Antoinette and the Princess de Lamballe risen from the dead. To-morrow morning the shutters would be down, and the garish sunlight would be in the place; she herself would have to take her place among the headless images, herself the best dressed among them all. On the dreadful morrow every noodle in London would have the right of staring at the beautiful Mrs. Arnaud, and would discuss her history unfavourably to herself. And although she wished that

the morrow was come, and that her torture was begun, the present solitude was almost too horrible to be born.

One of the bravest men in the world, a non-combatant, said to us once, about the battle of the Alma, that he was more frightened at the beginning of that battle than ever he had been since he went in for *vivâ voce* in his little-go. Our friend was not easily frightened, any more than was Mrs. Arnaud. Still Mrs. Arnaud was in a state of nervous terror difficult to be conceived. She kept on saying to herself, ‘if he were to come now, when Rachel is away and I am alone, I should go out of my mind. And he is in town, and might take it into his head to come. What on earth should I do then?’ She sat down again and waited, with her heart in her mouth, for every footfall.

What could Lord Rhyader have done to

her if he *had* come? She never asked herself that question : an all too blameless nobleman, devoted to his country's good, a man who would have died sooner than say a rude word to a costermonger's wife ; what had she to fear from *him*? He was not likely to murder her ; had he done so, her troubles would have been over for ever, and he would have fallen a victim to the outraged laws of the British Empire ; ~~two~~ results, which in her present state of mind she could have regarded with quiet satisfaction. Why should she, therefore, be so dreadfully afraid of Lord Rhyader?

She was so afraid of his coming and finding her alone, however, that she could not sit still, she wandered out from the little back parlour through the door which connected it with the hall. Here she found something which distracted her thoughts for a short

time. She had not only bought the dress-making business of her predecessor, but she had bought the lease of the house, and the lodgers also. She had got a categorical description of those lodgers, but she had never seen any of them, for it was her first evening in the house : according to her predecessor, they were the best lodgers ever seen : giving no earthly trouble and paying like clockwork. It suddenly struck her that her new servants had not arrived, that her lodgers were still out, and that it would be quite as well to go through their rooms and see that all was comfortable for them. The new servants were to come at night ; Rachel would not be home before that time and would probably be cross ; so she went upstairs with a candle, and with a new anxiety left her fright behind her for a short time.

The first floor, directly over the shop, was so large, that she lit the Honourable Algernon D'Arcy's gas for him, and then looked round his room, or rather her own. He was a young guardsman, she knew, so she was bound to love him, and assist him in every way, as a soldier's widow. After a very carefully carried out examination of his rooms, and such of his papers as were lying about, she was forced to conclude that he had not so much as learnt the grammar of art, and had turned his genius principally to mathematics. His oleographs and chromolithographs were neither well selected nor well arranged ; and as for the mathematical papers which were strewn about, she argued from the frequent corrections that it would take Mrs. Somerville and Sir John Herschel to set them right again. That he was an extremely diligent officer she had heard

from her predecessor, but she left his room with the impression that he was cramming with an insufficient education. That he desired to be married to a religious young lady, and that there were temporary difficulties in the way, she discovered before she had been in the room ten minutes. We can no more tell how she did so than we can tell how a laden bee knows the way home, or how she discovered that he was careless with his money, and that his mother was dead. She, however, made all these discoveries before she left his room and went up to the second floor, saying to herself, 'poor fellow, he wants looking after, I will treat him as though he were my own lost boy.'

The second floor was in the occupation of Mr. George Drummond, the lawyer's son and heir, a young clerk in the Home office.

His æsthetic tastes seemed to be superior to Mr. D'Arcy's, and his habits more methodical; his solitary picture was an artist's proof of Holman Hunt's 'Finding in the Temple,' and altogether he seemed a methodical person; none of his papers were lying about; his pipes were arranged in racks over the mantel-piece, and on either side were two japanned receptacles, like those in an office, one marked 'bills paid,' and the other 'bills unpaid;' the former was full, the latter was empty; Mr. D'Arcy below had no such arrangement, and Mrs. Arnaud thought that Mr. Drummond would be an excellent lodger, who would require no taking care of, as he seemed perfectly able to take care of himself. He was evidently the sort of person she disliked heartily, the very arrangement of his books in his bedroom offended her; he must have put them

right himself that morning, for there was no one else to do it : they were there in a row, just as if an idle valet had placed them. She took a dislike to Mr. Drummond, and a very strong liking for Mr. D'Arcy, 'yet,' she thought, 'it is unfair to remember who his father was.'

Then she went down stairs again, and as she went looked into D'Arcy's room, and sat down in his easy chair for a time. Then she found herself in the hall, with the light playing in over the door, and she knew that she must go back again alone into her solitude.

There was a swift foot upon the steps, and for an instant she remained paralysed with the idea that it was Lord Rhyader. She might have reassured herself had she had time to think, for whatever powers Lord Rhyader had over her, he had certainly not got the latch-key of her house. The new-

comer had, and used it with familiarity ; the door was open for a moment and she saw a tall figure against the evening sky. Then the door was shut, and she was in semi-darkness with a man.

‘To whom have I the honour of—’ said Mrs. Arnaud.

‘George Drummond,’ said a pleasant voice. ‘I suppose you are Mrs. Arnaud.’

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. ARNAUD'S DEFIANCE.

It was rather an unfortunate introduction between these two people, for at the sound of George Drummond's voice she grew faint, and asked him to give her his arm. He did so at once, of course, and led her into the parlour behind the shop. She sat down on the sofa, and George Drummond would possibly have asked her how she felt, but at that moment there came a thundering knock at the door.

‘Mrs. Arnaud started up at once, ‘There he is,’ she said : ‘Mr. Drummond, I charge you not to leave me alone with that man.’

‘Certainly not,’ said George Drummond, ‘but what is the man’s name?’

‘Lord Rhyader,’ said Mrs. Arnaud. ‘If I am left alone with him there will be mischief.’

‘Lord Rhyader!’ said George Drummond: ‘why I know him very well. What makes you afraid of him?’

‘No matter,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘you stay with me, that is all.’

‘I will stay with you, certainly,’ said George Drummond, ‘but when is your servant going to open the door?’

‘My servants are all out,’ said Mrs. Arnaud. ‘Heavens, he is knocking again.’

‘Let me go and open the door,’ said George Drummond.

‘If you are not afraid,’ said Mrs. Arnaud.

‘Who was ever afraid of Lord Rhyader?’

he said; and while she lit the candle, he went and opened the door, so they came in together.

He was by no means a terrible looking person, being of peaceful aspect, about forty-five, wearing spectacles, and mutton-chop whiskers. Had you met him in the street you would have taken him for a successful barrister, a thing which he probably would have been had he not been possessed of fifty thousand a year in prospect. His first words as he came before George Drummond were, 'My dear Mary, what insanity is this?'

'Gervase,' she said trembling and pale: 'you have brought it on yourself, and you see the results. Allow me to observe that there is a third person in the room, a stranger to me at all events, though his father was none.'

Lord Rhyader turned and saw George Drummond, 'Why Drummond!' he exclaimed with unfeigned astonishment, 'what brings you here?'

'I might ask you the same question, with the same look of amazement, Lord Rhyader,' said George Drummond, laughing, 'only Mrs. Arnaud, whom I found alone in the house, told me whom I was to expect. The mystery on my part is easily solved, I am Mrs. Arnaud's lodger.'

'I did not know you had moved,' said Lord Rhyader. 'I am very anxious to see Mrs. Arnaud alone. Nay, Mary, I will: sooner or later we must have an explanation. Why not have it over at once?'

'You had better go, Mr. Drummond,' said Mrs. Arnaud, quietly; and he went.

Lord Rhyader sat opposite to Mrs. Arnaud silent for half a minute, until he saw

that he would have to speak first : he did so.

‘ This is scarcely fair, Mary.’

‘ I do not know what you mean, Gervase.’

‘ I think you do, for you have accepted my protection and that of Lady Rhyader for some years now, and acquiesced in your real position, which I confess was a very painful one.’

‘ I never acquiesced in my real position, I consented to a false one, for the sake of one who is lost. Now that I know the truth, I withdraw from my former situation, and prove him to be an honourable man.’

Her courage was coming back to her rapidly now. The terror of this interview and this explanation had nearly driven her mad ; here it had come : here she was face to face with facts, and she was not in the least degree frightened. How completely

absurd artificial terrors are, and yet how terrible until they are faced. The thing had come on her, the anticipation of which had made her half crazy, and she was almost laughing over her winning hand. He had played his last card. He could do nothing more than he had done. He was entirely powerless. What a fool she thought herself for ever having been frightened.

‘Mary,’ he said, ‘will you listen to reason?’

‘Yes.’

‘Will you allow me to go through the facts of our relations, like a lawyer?’

‘Certainly. I shall correct you when you err, however.’

‘Good,’ said Lord Rhyader: ‘My poor brother grossly deceived himself and you by inducing you and himself also to believe that you were married to him. Such you know was not the fact.’

‘Such, I know, now, *was* the fact. Lord Festiniog and yourself could have known it had you cared to do so. I was married at the consulate at Leghorn, but I was told afterwards that the marriage was illegal. I believed it, whereas, Gervase, you know that I am as honestly married as you are.’

‘Have you the proofs?’

‘Yes, I certainly have. Otherwise I should never have had painted up over my shop door “The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud.”

‘Mary, you have never done that!’

‘Take the candle out into the street, and look for yourself, Gervase. You will see that I have done it; and I told your father that I would, and I have, and it will bring custom to me, and annoyance to Lord Festiniog.’

‘Why do you wish to annoy my father? He has been very kind to you.’

‘Kind! I am beholden to him for nothing, and after I have put the proofs of my marriage in his hand, he still hesitates to recognise me.’

‘Then this is the dreadful quarrel between you two, of which he has spoken since I came from France.’

‘I suppose so. It is a matter of indifference to me if it is or not. He knows that I could put my legal claims to be his daughter-in-law before any court of equity in the land, were it worth my while, which it is not, for I have no children. I offer to prove that your brother Iltyd was an honourable man; he tries to prevent me, and leave your brother’s memory with the stain of villany upon it. Iltyd was no villain, and I will not have him called so, even by his own father. What is the use of discussing the matter further; your father has defied me, and the conse-

quence is that I have had "The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud" painted up over my shop.'

'But, Mary, supposing all this to be true, why do you irritate my father so?'

'Why does he irritate me?' was her answer. 'He has refused to acknowledge me. Besides, what is the use of talking over the matter; the thing is done, and all London will see it to-morrow.'

'It will kill my father,' said Lord Rhyader.

'What nonsense people in your position can talk, when they give their minds to it. It will kill him, you say, to have his favourite son's innocence proved to the world. I, however, am not afraid of *him*.'

'I fear you are afraid of no one, Mary.'

'Yes. It is odd, but I am afraid of you. At times only, mind, but still sometimes.'

'At what times are those?'

‘We have talked enough,’ she replied, ‘I am not afraid of you now, brother-in-law, at all events. I am your sister-in-law, and you cannot disprove it. Ah, you may wince, but you cannot. Take my defiance to Lord Festiniog, and tell him that if he will freely do what I could force him to do, acknowledge that his son was not a villain, I will paint out my own name over the shop window, and paint in my niece’s, for she is my heiress.’

‘Your niece. I never saw her.’

‘Nor I. She is my brother’s child. She was brought up to the same trade as I was, and by that great mistress of it, my mother. You knew very little of us; we never desired that you should. My family, with which I have parted in consequence of marrying your brother, are the greatest family of dress-makers in the world. It is in the bounds of

possibility that even my own mother may speak to me again, when Lord Festiniog recognises me—as he shall, now I know the truth.’

‘I suppose there is no use prolonging the discussion, Mary.’

‘There is none to prolong,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘good night.’

Lord Rhyader felt that he had nothing to say but ‘good night,’ and so he said it and went.

CHAPTER V.

MORE OF THE FIRST NIGHT.

THE nightmare was gone. She had faced Rhyader, and he had not quarrelled with her. The whole secret of her terror lay in that. He was her husband's brother, and had been more kind to her than anybody. He was really the only person who connected her with her dead love. It is idle to think that women capable of such strong and almost violent resolutions, like Mrs. Arnaud, have not a deep fund of tenderness about them—that they cannot at times be utterly weak. Gervase was Ityd's brother, and so she, who cared nothing for the world as represented by Lord Festiniog, was terri-

fied lest he should quarrel with her. She might have known that he never quarrelled with anybody, but unfortunately she was without that information. He was gone to his father, and she feared he would have rather a stormy time of it.

However, it was early yet, and there was much more to be seen to before she went to bed. Rachel was unaccountably long gone, but here she was at last. A square featured middle aged woman, who had lost her way, and her temper also, in the wilderness of London, and who was very cross. She had, it appeared, got into an omnibus to go a little way up Oxford Street, and had found herself at Smithfield. On getting out she registered a vow never to get into one of those vehicles again, and walked back asking her way. She had been unable to do the errand she was sent on, and was so utterly

dazed that she thought she could not dare to go out again. Mrs. Arnaud remonstrated, but it was no use until George Drummond coming down for something, at once volunteered to escort her. Mrs. Arnaud was so delighted with his good humour that she could have done anything for him. So she was left alone in the house again, but not in terror as before.

A single knock. It was the new maid. She was easily disposed of and set to work. Another single knock, it was the new footman, who, having for the time being deposited his box downstairs, asked if he could make himself useful at once. Mrs. Arnaud sent him at once up stairs to see if Mr. Drummond's fire was burning.

The latch-key again, loud voices in the hall, the door slammed, a crash of falling human bodies, and oaths. Captain D'Arcy

and friend had come in in a very great hurry and tumbled headlong over the footman's box. 'Here is a pretty beginning,' said Mrs. Arnaud, as she took out a candle, and discovered to her horror that the hall gas had never been lit. Two good-looking soldierly men were rubbing their shins and elbows, when this splendid, almost ghostly figure of Mrs. Arnaud approached them.

'Captain D'Arcy,' she said, addressing the wrong one: 'I am exceedingly sorry that the hall lamp was unfortunately not lighted sooner. I will do everything I can to make you comfortable, but I have only arrived this afternoon, and you must try to forgive the mishaps of the first night.'

'That is done in every theatre, madame,' said the man she had addressed, 'but I am not D'Arcy, he is somewhere back in the darkness, looking for his hat.'

D'Arcy reappeared with it on his head ; the moment he saw Mrs. Arnaud, he took it off again and bowed. 'I beg a thousand pardons, Mrs. Arnaud, for entering the house in this manner, but I fancy that you have had some new convenience erected in the hall since this morning, with the existence of which I was unacquainted. I am aware somehow of the presence of a foreign substance.'

A nice smiling slight man, very pleasant to look at indeed, with a manner which set them all three laughing ; he bowed again and passed on. Immediately afterwards Rachel and George Drummond came in, and the whole house was in a bustle. She, the maid, the footman, and Rachel, were upstairs and down. It was eleven o'clock before she, being then at the top of the house, asked the maid (as pleasant a little

maid as need be) whether she knew if her supper was ready.

‘Mrs. Rachel had got it ready,’ she said.

‘Well, then, I shall go to it,’ she said, adding to herself, ‘She will not come to night now. I hope she will to-morrow.’

She went down slowly to her own little back parlour, approached the fireplace, and then suddenly cried out loud, ‘Good gracious have mercy upon us!’

CHAPTER VI.

HELOISE.

SITTING in Mrs. Arnaud's own chair, with open work-box beside her, and her bonnet off, looking exactly as if she had been sitting there habitually for the last ten years, was the most lovely and beautifully dressed little French brunette she had ever seen. She simply took Mrs. Arnaud's breath away, and if she had faded away at once Mrs. Arnaud would have taken her to be a hallucination of her own brain, produced by over excitement, and taken medical advice. But she was perfectly real, when she heard Mrs. Arnaud's exclamation she looked up and came towards her, sewing briskly. She put her work behind her, kissed Mrs. Arnaud on both

cheeks, and then stood before her laughing with her eyes and mouth ('what teeth,' thought Mrs. Arnaud), but making no sound whatever. She was real enough.

Mrs. Arnaud repeated, 'Why, good gracious, goodness me!'

The beautiful little creature began nodding her head now, and smiling instead of laughing. Mrs. Arnaud found it necessary to speak in spite of her delighted surprise: 'Why, my love, you must be Heloise, and are you dumb?'

It very soon appeared she was not; from between her pearly teeth came a babbling flow of the most perfect English, with just such a slight *soupeçon* of French accent as would be totally unproduceable in English by a far cleverer pen than this can pretend to be, and with no imitation of which shall we trouble the reader. She began:—

‘Yes, aunt,’ she said, ‘it is Heloise, your little housekeeper and assistant. Ah! but you have my father’s eyes, though, and I should love you for that if for nothing else. We will be happy in this pretty little parlour, will we not?’ And much more in the same pleasant way, before Mrs. Arnaud could get in a word at all.

‘How did you get into the house, my dear?’ she said at last.

‘Chemin de fer du Nord, and then the packet-boat, and that you will understand was a sad thing; not that I was sick, aunt, but that the others were lamentably so. And in my opinion, those who are sick at sea should declare themselves at the custom-house, and be put in a separate cabin. Well, then, next the Douane, where I had nothing to declare; then the South-Eastern Railway to Victoria, and then the cab here. Then I

knocked at the door, and Madame Rachel opened it, and the cabman asked four shillings, to which demand Madame Rachel replied in words of the most proud and contemptuous, and gave him half-a-crown. He at once intimated that he should appeal to the judge of instruction, and she replied that he might if he liked. He then departed without success. She then let me in, and told me that you were busy *au troisième*, and I came in and set to work. You open to-morrow, I understand, and I should like to open well.'

'I have no doubt that we shall do so,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'But I think that you had much better go back to Paris.'

'Ah, you laugh now at me, but your reason?'

'You are too pretty, my love; I am sorry for it, but that is the simple fact of the

case. I, when I made this bargain with my brother and my mother, never bargained for you.'

'Well, then, you have made a bad bargain, and must abide by it. Now, aunt, I am certainly not going back to Paris, and so the best thing we can do is to—' she paused.

'What now, little one?' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'Look into the shop, my dear aunt. Of your genius there is no doubt, but of your knowledge of later details, much.'

'We will have supper now, Heloise, and see to that in the morning,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'It is a good proposition,' she said, and they sat down to supper, Rachel waiting.

'Is my brother well,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'No,' said Heloise; 'he has the continual cramps in his stomach, which he derives from

the drinking of the wine from the vineyard which he purchased of Alphonse Bourdon. The doctor advises him cognac, but he insists that the wine of his vineyard is better. I wish, I am sure, he would take to cognac, for no wine worth drinking is grown in the north of France. He, however, sent his love to you.'

'And your grandmother?'

'Well, for that, she is my grandmother, and tells me that I have no taste in colours, shall come to no good, and marry an English paper-hanger. I say for my part, that I will certainly do so if I like him, and he has enough money.'

'We must try to do better for you than that, my love,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'You seem to have very good taste. Stand up.'

The little fairy did so. The jewel was certainly set in a case which, to Mrs. Ar-

naud's experienced eye was worthy of it. She put her elbow on the table and her hand on her forehead, and remained silent. Heloise with quiet dexterity arranged the remains of the supper together, ready to be carried away, and when that was done rang the bell.

Rachel appeared, and Mrs. Arnaud took no notice.

'Madame,' said Heloise: 'shall I assist you to carry these things downstairs? we are in a little confusion to night, as you doubtless know. I will tell you a secret, Madame Rachel. Have you ever travelled?'

'No, Miss.'

'Then I tell you that we French are far better housekeepers than you English. I shall give you the benefit of my advice and assistance, and if you rebel against me at all I shall beat you. Let us help one

another: I will take these plates, you take those.'

Rachel did as she was bid. As soon as they were in the passage together, Rachel said to her bluntly:

'I would have given a thousand pounds if I had it, Miss, to have you here. You will do more good for my mistress than what you know. You are the very person we wanted to keep her out of her low fits. For brave as she is, she has them still. When you see one coming on, you, just in your pleasant way—bother that knocker, there is some-one else now, we sha'nt get to bed until two. Here Susan, come and open the door.

Here was the last arrival for the night. Mrs. Arnaud had roused herself, and was silently helping Heloise and Rachel in putting away the things, when the door was opened, there was a scuffle in the passage.

Susan screamed, and a railway porter was towed into the room by a large dog. The porter finding himself apparently, as far as the dog was concerned, *en pays de connaissance*, let go of the chain; the dog leaped on the table and flew, apparently, at Mrs. Arnaud's throat. She embraced him. Rachel who was counting the plate, banged him violently over the tail with a tablespoon, and the porter, like a man who had done his duty, took off his hat and wiped his fevered brow.'

'Bran! Bran!' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'why it is my own Bran. And grumpy sister Mary has sent him to me after all. Has sister Mary sent any message with him?'

The porter said that he understood from the station-master that the dog was to be brought on that night at any expense. Lady Mary Corby had requested that it

should be done, She, as the lady doubtless knew, was their chairman's sister ; and so he had come away with it at once.

The porter was rewarded beyond his utmost hopes ; Bran, a long Scotch terrier was quieted, Captain D'Arcy's friend departed, and, oh ! for the bathos, everybody went to bed.

Heloise slept in her aunt's room. Mrs. Arnaud thought that the girl was asleep. But when she had lain down the girl said to her, ' what did you say, aunt ? '

' Nothing,' said Mrs. Arnaud. But that was not exactly true. She had said to herself aloud, ' The girl is too pretty and might get into mischief.' So there was peace in that house for one night, at all events.

CHAPTER VII.

OPENING DAY.

THE morning, the most dreaded morning came; and Mrs. Arnaud woke with very much the feeling of a criminal about to be hanged as soon as he had eaten a hearty breakfast; a thing which murderers under sentence seem always to do. She had to face the world once more in her old character; and that to her was worse than going out of it by an easy death. She said to herself (she would never have used such a vulgarity to any other human being) 'I would sooner be—well—executed, than go through to-day. They say that the death is so easy. Yet how can they possibly know? they have none of them been executed themselves.'

With such feelings did Mrs. Arnaud get out of bed, slip on her dressing-gown, and go to the window to look into the silent street. The atmosphere of London in the summer mornings is very good ; even St. George's, Hanover Square, looked sharp and clear ; and she thought that it would not do badly under the sky of Paris, though a poor building enough in our mid-day London smoke. She opened the window to let the fresh air in, so that it might awaken Heloise, and then she turned to her bed : it was empty.

Not only empty but perfectly made. Heloise's night-dress was lying in a pretty embroidered bag, on the smoothed pillow. Her peignoir was carefully folded on the chair beside the dressing-table ; and as Mrs. Arnaud looked round, she perceived that every thing which she, Mrs. Arnaud, could possibly want, had been set out and arranged for her

while she was asleep, yet it was only seven o'clock.

‘Well!’ said Mrs. Arnaud. ‘If that girl is as good a milliner as she is a lady’s maid we shall do very well. She must have a foot like a fox for I never heard her. I suppose I had better dress myself. I wish she were not so pretty.’

She did so, but it took a long time though it was only her first toilette. She was beautiful and she knew it well; but she never dressed because she was beautiful, but from the instinct of her life. She was perfectly dressed when she left her room to go downstairs, but she would no more have gone beyond the street door in such a costume, then she would have walked about the Palais Royal in her dressing gown, or than she would have used her magnificent voice in a music-hall at Stepney. She had

no passion for dress, only an instinct, which some say is only acquired at Paris, though we should say that it was equally strong at Metz.

Coming downstairs, however, perfectly dressed, she passed into the parlour; she found her breakfast ready, with the coffee on the hob, and her hot roll before the fire. There also she found Heloise, rather better dressed than herself if it were possible, sitting in her chair, with a great fold of blue satin over her knees, the hem of which she was turning up diligently.

‘My dear aunt,’ she said, ‘come here and kiss me and tell me that you forgive me for not waking you. I cannot serve you for I should soil my hands; but Rachel and I have your breakfast ready. I have been in terror over this dress, and I find that you have no machine in the house.’

‘What dress is it.’

‘It is Lady Bludyer’s, due to-morrow. I have sent out to hire a machine, and I will manage it for you.’

‘But I know nothing about it.’

‘No doubt, but it is in the order book, which I looked over this morning, and it must be done. There are many other things in the order book do you see; I can manage them all with a machine. Your predecessor was a vastly stupid person, but in spite of her stupidity *she* had a good connection; *you* and I must **keep it.**’

‘You little jewel, you shall stay with me,’ said Mrs. Arnaud.

‘And indeed I mean to do so,’ said the busy little Heloise. ‘There is one thing, aunt, which I wish to know.’

‘And that?’

‘ Is this little parlour of yours private?
Do your lodgers come here?’

‘ Never.’

‘ Make that a rule. I am not afraid of
Frenchmen, but manners are different in
different countries, that is all.’

‘ No one shall speak to you, dear.’

‘ I did not mean that. I shall speak to
any one I choose, but always first. Re-
member that.’

‘ Ah! here is Madame Rachel.’

When at ten o'clock the shop windows
were opened, Mrs. Arnaud sat down among
the ~~headless~~ effigies in a perfectly calm
frame of mind. She had changed her
toilette, and was ready for anybody. She
heard the busy machine of her niece Heloise,
going in the back parlour, and, with that
brave beauty at her back, feared nothing.

For she thought that the girl was as brave,

as honest, and as true as she was herself, and she knew also that the girl had experiences of a world of which she knew nothing, the world of Paris. She herself knew Leghorn, Naples and Rome, but what was that? The girl's taste in colour was more bright than neutral, but was every one to dress in the same way? The girl was a mine of gold to her, and besides, she loved her, and intended to take uncommonly good care that no one else should. Little did she dream the truth.

Mrs. Arnaud sat in her shop from ten o'clock until twelve, but nobody came. She began to think about the bankruptcy court, and went into the parlour to speak to Heloise on the subject. The moment she had done so, she was fetched back by the footman, and began life in earnest once more.

Her first customer : she remembered her

well in her mother's time, and the lady remembered her very well ; but from motives, possibly, of delicacy, did not choose to say so : she only said, 'I believe that you are the daughter of Madame Merton, who emigrated most unfortunately to Paris after a sad domestic affliction some years ago. If you inherit her taste you ought to do well.'

'To mention it the first day,' thought Mrs Arnaud, 'I will plague her. What would Lady Sotheby desire?' she asked.

Lady Sotheby, a beauty, originally of very low extraction, who was fifty if she was a day, was now about to marry a third time. The new bridegroom was a rich manufacturing engineer, without any pretensions to birth, a man who had worked at the bench it was said, but with infinitely more pretensions to be a gentleman than ever Lady Sotheby had to be a lady, if manners

and education were taken into account. He was one of the first practical engineers in the land, and an F.R.S.; and, at forty-five, he had taken it into his head to propose to Lady Sotheby. She had hummed and hawed over the matter, and at last had referred him to her last noble father-in-law, who told him that he, as far as he was concerned, was perfectly willing in the matter, and told her, in a private interview, that she had made a splendid catch, and that he hoped she would leave off her nonsense for the future, because her new husband most certainly would not stand it.

Lady Sotheby at first seemed to want everything in the shop, but she settled down at last to a purple satin gown, and a powder blue (*Chasseur d'Afrique*) cloak, both to be made up at once and sent home. She then asked what were the fashionable

colours for a bride on her wedding tour.

Mrs. Arnaud's irritation against her found its vent at last. She said :—

‘For a lady who is going to be married for the third time, within three months of her own mother's death, slight mourning is the most fashionable, my lady.’

The old Elizabethan expression of one person ‘looking daggers’ at another is of no use to us at all. Lady Sotheby looked cobras and rattlesnakes. If she could have bitten Mrs. Arnaud and have given her the hydrophobia she would have done it. But the good millionaire had heard nothing, so she only said, ‘You will be pleased to send the dress and the cloak by to-morrow.’

‘I beg your ladyship's pardon,’ said Mrs. Arnaud: ‘Do you mean to wear them together?’

‘Certainly,’ said Lady Sotheby.

‘Then,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘I am sorry to say that I cannot supply you. If you went into the streets such a figure, and the iniquity of it was traced home to me, I should lose the confidence of my customers, and might as well shut up my shop.’

Lady Sotheby said, ‘Woman !’

‘Yes, my lady. I think we understand one another, but to be fair and frank with you, I am not afraid of you at all. I neither want your good word nor your custom.’

On the dignified departure of that lady, she went back to Heloise. ‘Brave aunt,’ she said, ‘I heard every word. Is he rich? will he pay the money she owes grandmamma in Paris?’

‘Never name it, child, never make mischief between man and wife. Here is another customer.’

‘I will undertake this one,’ said Heloise, going quietly into the shop. The footman whispered to her, ‘Lord and Lady Morningside.’

The old Scotch judge had seated himself, and Lady Morningside was wandering about among the fine things. My Lord, very old and short of breath, looked at Heloise as she curtsied to him ; he said not one word, but called to Lady Morningside to come and look. She did so, and he remarked : ‘That is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen in my life. She is the very image of what you were when I married you.’

Heloise heard him, and said to herself, ‘Ah, I have heard that once or twice before. But now to business, my good people : her ladyship was never any more like me than I shall be like her. I shall never have a nose

like a tapir, and a mouth like a hippopotamus.'

She fancied herself very witty to have thought that; she made up her mind to tell it to her aunt and make her laugh, but our little miss got a lesson which she did not forget.

'My dear,' said Lady Morningside, 'I want a cap.'

'Shall I assist your ladyship to take your bonnet off?'

'No, I will do that myself, I think,' said the old lady: 'If you were to take off my bonnet you might take off my wig too, and then a pretty spectacle I should look without a hair on my head.'

'I should never have guessed it, madame,' said Heloise.

'You must be pretty young at your business then, my child,' said the old lady, 'or

you would know false hair from real. My own hair was as good as yours once. What pretty teeth you have.'

Heloise could not help smiling. Not to show them—of course not.

'Ah! I could smile once,' said the old lady, 'now I can only grin; but my teeth are as pretty as yours. They are artificial, my dear, and cost thirty guineas. You will be a worse spectacle than I am if you live, for there are no women like Ninon l'Enclos left among the French. See that you get a husband who will love you to the end, as mine does.'

'How am I to select him, madame?' said Heloise.

'God will select him for you. Do your duty by him, and when you are seventy you will be as happy as I am now. Once get a good man, and he will be exactly, as far

as you are concerned, what you make him.'

Heloise had nothing to say, but she thought of these things afterwards. Lord Morningside, who had not been in London for some years, seemed inclined to decorate this rather hideous old lady as though she had been a bride. Though he would have died on the block sooner than confess it, he had a distrust of all Scotch millinery and jewellery as being provincial. Abusing and pretending to hate London, he nevertheless determined that Lady Morningside should return to Edinburgh in garments which should raise envy in the county families, among whom he, as a mere law lord, risen from the ranks, and his wife, who had, it was said, been a shepherdess, were merely admitted by courtesy. Yet, the strange, childless old couple were well known, and profoundly

respected. She, in Edinburgh, as one of the most charitable and excellent of women : he, in London, as the shrewdest of Scottish lawyers. Mrs. Arnaud could have had no better advertisement than the good will of the grand old man.

Nor, indeed, did she suffer in a pecuniary point of view, as she found when she joined the party. Lady Morningside was buying everything she could lay her hands on, and what is more, exercising very great good taste. The Scotch women have, on the whole, better taste in dress than the English, though it takes a French woman to wear tartan to perfection. Mrs. Arnaud found no fault with Lady Morningside's arrangements, save in slight details, which that lady altered at once by her advice. Finally, Lord and Lady Morningside got the footman to fetch a four-wheeled cab, and

went away in it, leaving Mrs. Arnaud richer by 116*l*.

‘Now,’ said Heloise as they sat down to table: ‘we will have dinner. If other customers come, Rachel shall serve them, and put on their things upside down. That we shall make our fortunes is quite undoubted. But she is an old skeleton who has come out of the cupboard.’

‘Who?’

‘Why, Lady Morningside,’ said Heloise. ‘She said that I should be just as terrible a figure as she is when I am her age. But she said, moreover, that I must choose my husband by chance, and form him afterwards. I would not take the trouble. Aunt, what is the use of having a husband at all? that is what I am unable to discover. If you loved a man I can understand that you undertook his sorrows and your own together, until the

day of judgment. But a mere husband, Bah! a man you have never seen half-a-dozen times, and who may be disagreeable, and spend all your money. I cannot see why women who can earn their own living should marry.'

'You do not like men then, my little niece,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'On the contrary I adore men, but I do not want them to marry me.'

'You mean that you have never seen a man you cared to marry.'

'No.'

'Have you had any lovers?'

'Two. They, however, were lovers sent by the family, and came with bouquets and new gloves. I soon disposed of them. They came smirking as though the affair was settled. One, a sensible fellow, took his answer and went away; the other per-

sisted after I had given my answer. The Burgundy blood which is in me came out. I arose in my fury—I was at work—and told him that if he did not leave the room, I would stab him to his false heart with my needle. He was frightened, this one, and departed like the other. Save these I have had no lovers.—See, we have a soldier in the room.’

She actually sat before Mrs. Arnaud and uttered all this without change of countenance, looking Mrs. Arnaud straight in the face. She surely should have hailed from Gascony, not from Burgundy.

‘I beg your pardon, Mrs. Arnaud,’ said a very quiet voice, ‘but I am on duty this afternoon and I should be exceedingly obliged if you would—I think I see Mademoiselle Heloise, whom I knew in Paris.’

‘Surely,’ she said, rising. ‘Why it is M. D’Arcy, my old confidant. And how goes the——?’

He shook his head laughing, and addressed Mrs. Arnaud. He was a well-looking young man at all times, and looked all the better in his uniform. He was certainly very attractive, and Mrs. Arnaud might have wished him less so, but she remembered what she had seen upstairs, and did not mind. He was engaged.

‘I am pleased to renew my acquaintance with the young lady. I hope I shall be allowed to pay my respects to her sometimes. I will take my leave.’

They had a busy afternoon; her predecessor’s customers seemed to rally round her very well, and it was evident that she and Heloise were in possession of a handsome income, and so ended the first day,

Heloise being more cheerful in the evening than she had been in the morning, if possible, and continually wondering why women were ever so silly as to marry.

‘ You will be married within a year, my fawn,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, as they went upstairs.

‘ That is quite unlikely,’ replied Heloise, looking sharply at her aunt from the shadow.

CHAPTER VIII.

JAMES AND GEORGE DRUMMOND.

WHEN Drummond, the lawyer, told Mrs. Arnaud that he disliked to see George Drummond because he reminded him of his mother, he told a falsehood. He was greatly attached to the young man. No father ever loved a son better or did more for a son. Lord Festiniog often noticed it to Lord Rhyader, and thought it very much to Drummond's credit, for, to tell the truth, Drummond had made a hopelessly bad match, and Mrs. Drummond, long before her death, was settled out of his house by a monetary arrangement. With her we

have nothing whatever to do. She was dead, and Drummond, a comparatively young man, was free to marry whom he liked, provided that the lady was of the same mind as himself.

The day after Mrs. Arnaud's new entry into the world, he had asked George to dine with him, and George and he were sitting together over their wine in a small but very expensive house in Park Lane.

'Well, and have you seen your landlady yet, George?' said Drummond, passing the decanter, 'and if so, what do you think of her?'

'I think her a magnificent woman; I was very much taken with her. I tell you everything, you know, father, and so I tell you this. I saw her under very peculiar circumstances. Rhyader came to her the first night she was in the house, and terrified her.'

‘ Ah, I daresay she would be frightened at seeing him for the first time under the circumstances.’

‘ And what were they ?’

‘ Well, I will tell you,’ said Drummond. ‘ She has, after many years, found out that she was really married to Rhyader’s brother, Iltyd, and she insists that my lord should recognise the fact. They have had a most tremendous fight over it. She told him that she would shame him into acknowledgment by writing “ The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud ” over her shop door. Has she done so ?’

‘ I don’t fancy she has, but I was never aware of the fact that you knew her. You astonish me completely,’ said George Drummond. ‘ There is “ Mrs. Arnaud ” in very large letters, but there are undecipherable words on each side. So she may have done so.’

‘Clever woman, I daresay if you look closer you will find that she has.’

‘But will Lord Festiniog acknowledge her?’

‘I don’t know. After fighting the woman single-handed, he came to me for assistance, and asked me, as his legal adviser, whether she had any claim. I looked into the matter, and told him that he had not a leg to stand on, and that she was his son’s wife. Then he got into a huff, and said he should have counsel’s opinion. But all the counsel in the world will make her nothing but his son’s wife. I told him that as she had no children, the acknowledgment of her could do him no harm, and proposed to him to offer her a sum of money to keep her counsel. Even he laughed at the idea of such a thing, and so the matter stands to this hour.’

‘Who was Mrs. Arnaud, father?’

‘Marie or Mary Merton. Her father was an Englishman, her mother the queen of French modistes in England. When her daughter went off from Bond Street with young Iltyd Arnaud she migrated to Paris, and refused to see or hear of her daughter; but now Mrs. Arnaud has proved her marriage, they are the best friends in the world, again, I believe. I saw her in Paris only a fortnight ago. She is sending over a niece of Mrs. Arnaud’s, a favourite grand-daughter of hers, to assist her in the business. Have you seen her?’

‘No, I am not in the least degree likely to see her.’

‘Well, that is lucky for your heart at all events. She is the most beautiful creature I ever saw.’

‘Then my fellow lodger, D’Arcy, should see her, and console himself.’

‘I know what you are going to say. Poor spoony, that is all over with him. I can tell you that he has got his *congé*.’

‘From her father?’

‘Yes, and from the whole lot of them. The family would not have stood such a thing for a moment. He can’t keep her as she would expect. She will be much happier without him; I daresay he won’t mind; he will be free again, and if he makes much acquaintance with Mademoiselle He-loise, he will be a dangerous rival.’

‘To whom?’

‘To yourself.’

‘But I don’t want to have anything to do with the girl.’

‘Well, you may be deficient in good taste, of course.’

‘But I could not marry a French milliner.’

‘Why not, if you asked her? You are only an attorney’s son. I can tell you from what I have heard of the young lady, that *I* should not object.’

‘Ah, you are having your joke, sir; I thought I was to be a gentleman.’

‘And so you are, though mind, I will not have you an idle one; you stick to your desk, it won’t give you much money, my boy, you must come to me for *that*, but it will give you position; you will rise in that service with your talents and industry, far higher than you could in my business. Do you want any money, George?’

‘No, father, I can lend you ten pounds if you like. Why should I want money? You give me my horse and my clothes, and keep me like a gentleman; you have done every-

thing which could be done for me. I wish that I could go back to the university, and get a better degree than I did, to show my gratitude, but that is too late.'

'I am perfectly satisfied, George, your degree was good enough. If I had meant you to take a better degree I should have sent you to another college. You held your own bravely, and I am proud of you.'

George reached over his hand, and the other took it silently. Mr. Drummond's hand shook, and his face was disturbed by some strong emotion. The conversation changed, and not long afterwards they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

FESTINIOG AND RHYADER.

MRS. ARNAUD'S dreadful threat of writing up 'the Honourable Mrs. Arnaud,' over her shop, had actually been fulfilled. But it had been done in a way which left a compromise possible. Two little flourishes on the left contained the dreadful words, those words of fate, 'the honourable ;' but no one could read them; while on the right were two other little flourishes also illegible, containing the words 'milliner and dressmaker.' Between those two scrolls came the great golden legend, 'MRS. ARNAUD.' And so

no one, unless they had taken an opera glass, was one whit the wiser.

With the exception of Lord Rhyader. After his interview with Mrs. Arnaud he had reconnoitred the premises, and had seen that she had really done as she threatened. He departed and told his father. They laid their heads together, and agreed that it would not do to trifle with her.'

'And it would not be right to trifle with her either,' said Lord Rhyader, 'now that we know all that we do.'

'Why, no !' said Lord Festiniog. 'As long as I was in doubt I did not care. But there is no doubt any longer now. She is your sister-in-law, and her marriage was perfectly legal. It would be most ungentlemanly, and also most impolitic to dispute it. I suppose she will marry Drummond.'

'I don't think so. Still she might. We

can, however, not dispute the fact of her having been married.'

'Now, Rhyader, will you explain to me this? Drummond must surely have known of the circumstances, for he was often with her abroad. Why did he conceal them from me? I appealed to him about the matter, and he at once gave it against me. I don't clearly make that out.'

'Nor I either,' said Lord Rhyader. 'If I were to say that I distrusted Drummond, I should lie: if I said that I trusted him, I should also lie. He loved her once, you know: that explains much. He is a lawyer: that explains more. He evidently could have known the thing had he chosen, but did not choose until you appealed to him to do his duty by you. I don't profess to understand a man like Drummond. If you had had a drunken wife, sir, you might have

had a craze or so in your brain. Have you any fault to find with him, further than this concealment, if concealment it be?'

'None. Money grows under his hands; I have really nothing to do but to sign my name. And, besides, he must be very rich.'

'You had better let him marry Mary, sir,' said Lord Rhyader.

'The Honourable Mrs. Drummond,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I should not care. But she would not have him.'

'Indeed, I think so.'

'However,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you agree with me that this squabble with Mary ought to be patched up. You had better leave the how to me.'

'Oh yes, sir. She is such a dear creature and such a noble creature, that now, when we know all, or think we do, we should not continue it. Besides, in doing so,

we redeem poor Iltyd's memory so entirely.
I pray you to do it.'

'It shall be done, Gervase: it shall be done. Say no more.'

'You won't show any distrust to Drummond, father, will you?' said Lord Rhyader.

'Distrust Drummond, bless my heart, no. I will not distrust him at all, at least, in money matters. Yet he did an unprincipled thing once: he made love to Mary when he was a married man: that was utterly ill; but he was mad then, and it was very long ago. Have you seen his son lately?'

'That prig? yes I often see him.'

'What is he growing to be like? does he take after his father? I like what I have seen of him.'

'I do not particularly. George Drum-

mond is one of my pet horrors. Rugby, with a finish off of Brazenose, and a *post pleiocene* crust of Home office.'

'Cad?'

'Why no, worse than that. You may lick a cad into shape, but George Drummond has licked himself into shape, and a most objectionable shape it is.'

'I'll see more of him,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I fancy from your description that I should like him very much indeed. By-the-bye, that cub of yours has never been near me for two days, and his mother not for four. If they are going to cut me altogether, let me know it.'

'Oh, I should have told you. Alice and George have run down to Richmond for a few days.'

'I will follow them as soon as I have done with Mary. I shan't be long with you,

Gervase, and then you will have all. Let me see the boy as much as I can.'

'I am afraid that Barri loves you better than he does me, sir,' said Gervase.

CHAPTER X.

LORD FESTINIOG AND MRS. ARNAUD.

SOME days had passed of Mrs. Arnaud's new life. Even in that short time business had accumulated most rapidly. People had seen her and Heloise, and had told other people about them. Lord and Lady Morningside had sounded the first trumpet about them with no uncertain sound, and when a trumpet is sounded at the beginning of the season, it is generally attended to. There was a general assembly over these two splendid women, and the world rushed to see them. Had anything been wanted to add to their popularity, it was the fact that

Lady Sotheby steadily abused them, and said that Mrs. Arnaud had been grossly impertinent to her. As *she* was always impertinent to that part of the world to which she was admitted, this was a further recommendation, and so Mrs. Arnaud found her hands full.

‘Lady Drycough, who delighted in all the innocent wickedness of this world, once examined Heloise as to what Mrs. Arnaud had said to Lady Sotheby. Heloise said that she was not sure, but that she believed that her aunt had said that she was not there to dress up Guy Fawkes. This being repeated with emendations, did them vast good, for insulting the common enemy is a more popular thing in a certain world than assisting the common friend.

On the afternoon of the third day Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise had been extremely

busy. Affairs had increased on them so far that Mrs. Arnaud had written to Paris for Heloise's sister, Clotilde. Mrs. Arnaud felt perfectly faint with the work, and asking Heloise to stand in the breach for a quarter of an hour, said that she would go into her back parlour, and sit down in her chair.

Her chair ; her own sacred chair, was turned with its back towards the door, and in it was a square dogmatic head, covered with short white hair, the top and rear of which was only visible. The head was reading her illustrated Wordsworth, and the hands which belonged to it were long, thin, and old, and the right hand was covered with diamonds.

‘ Is that you, Mary ? ’ said the head without moving.

‘ Yes, my lord. ’

‘ Yes, fiddle. ’ Come and sit down

somewhere. I want to talk to you. Sit down somewhere where I cannot see you. Have you sat down ? ’

‘ Yes, Lord Festiniog. ’

‘ Good Mary. I have been entirely in the wrong in the matter in dispute between us. I have asked Drummond about it, and he says that you are in the right. I acknowledge you, entirely, as my poor son Iltyd’s wife, and your patience, and your virtues under your wrongs, have entirely endeared you to me. If you had any children living I might have been more eager to dispute your claim to be my daughter-in-law, but it would have been no use. I see that your marriage was legal in every way, and I rejoice that the cloud is removed from the memory of my son, who was dear to me, with all his faults. Do you desire anything more ? ’

‘What more can I desire? I only wish that our old relations should be renewed, and that I may see Lady Rhyader and the boy again. Pity my childless condition, and let him come to me sometimes.’

‘He shall come to you as often as you choose, though, faith, I am speaking for Rhyader rather freely. But he will not object, and you need not fear Alice. Don’t spoil the boy, you know, for he is the only hope of the house.’

‘I will take care of him,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, bending over and kissing Lord Festiniog’s forehead. ‘Now, good papa, would you like to see my niece Heloise?’

‘Very much indeed. I hear she is the most beautiful creature in London.’

Much as he had heard of her, however, in a few days, the reality surpassed his expectation; he had a short conversation with

her, and, as he rose to go, he said to himself, ‘ Master George Drummond had better look after his heart in that quarter;’ but in the hall he met D’Arcy and put a rider to his opinion, ‘ unless she takes a fancy to that spark, indeed, which is quite probable ; he seems as though he lodged in the house, for he came in with the latch-key. Mary has been a fool to have such a girl as that in the house, with young men for lodgers ; she will have a murder about her ; and now that I have privately acknowledged Mary as a dress-maker, we shall be still more distinguished. I will go back and have another talk to her.’

This time he went right into the shop and beckoned her to follow him into the parlour. She did so at once, to the surprise of the one customer who was there, and to the astonishment of the footman.

‘ Mary,’ he said, ‘ I have forgotten one

or two things. Our reconciliation need not be exactly public, I suppose, but I think that Rhyader and I had better have a paper drawn up by Drummond, saying that we are fully satisfied on the subject of Iltyd's honour and your own.'

'I don't want Drummond in it at all, my lord,' she said. 'Gervase and you could do it perfectly. I don't want to be thrown against Mr. Drummond: he is—'

She was as near as possible saying, 'He has for his own purposes, I believe, done me a great service; but he has been utterly false to you,' when she made this awkward pause.

'He is what?' said Lord Festiniog, not helping her in the least.

'He is,' said Mrs. Arnaud, looking steadily at him, 'attached to me.'

She expected an outburst of anger, but

none came, to her surprise. He said, 'I suspected that long ago, but he would never do for you, would he? not to be thought of?'

'Can you who knew your son Iltyd ask me such a question?'

'Why, only with the idea of getting one answer,' he said, good naturedly. 'I say, to change the subject, you will have trouble with that niece of yours, the young men will be cutting one another's heads off about her.'

'She can take care of herself,' said Mrs. Arnaud: which Mademoiselle Heloise certainly could do, though not exactly in the way Mrs. Arnaud meant.

'Ah! but can the young men take care of themselves?' he replied. 'I never could, I know. By the bye, Mary, put a dab of black paint on the left of your signboard will you, unless—'

'Unless what?'

‘ Well, I was going to write it, but I will speak it—Unless you choose to have ten thousand pounds settled on you; to make over your business to your niece; and to retire comfortably.’

‘ No. You are most kind and generous. You always were, save for a short time, but my answer will be now, always, no. A few days have shown me that I want employment, and I shall be happy here. Our secret is entirely our own; as for the small matter which, to spite you, I wrote up, it was done so artistically that I doubt if the painter could read it. No, Lord Festiniog, leave me to be happy in my own way, but let the boy come to me. I wish to see the boy sometimes. It is not much to ask. Send Barri.’

CHAPTER XI.

MADAME.

‘I SUPPOSE, aunt Arnaud, that you have heard from my sister Clotilde,’ said Heloise within a week of the last conversation.

‘Well, my dear, I have. I heard yesterday.’

‘Then she is coming at once, I suppose.’

‘Why, no ; I do not think that she is coming at all. I am afraid, my dear, that your grandmother is coming instead.’

‘*Le bon Dieu ne le per—*’ Heloise had got as far as that, when she was stopped by a look from Mrs. Arnaud, so she never said,

'*mettra jamais*;' which was what she meant to say. Mrs. Arnaud rode the high English horse over her at once.

'Family circumstances,' said Mrs. Arnaud, solemnly, 'have for certain reasons brought about a coolness between my mother and myself. Those circumstances and reasons are now removed. I shall welcome my mother as a daughter should.'

'But, grandmamma,' said Heloise, looking as cross as she could, and shrugging her shoulders.

'She is your grandmother, my dear, and my mother; you should remember that.'

'I am not likely to forget it, aunt. I came here to escape from her, and now she is coming after me. I thought that we were going to be so comfortable.'

'My child,' said Mrs. Arnaud, have you earned comfort? What have you ever done

which should give you the right of avoiding your grandmother?’

‘Well, if you come to that, aunt, what have you done which should give you the right of avoiding *your* grandmother?’

‘My grandmother is in Heaven,’ said Mrs. Arnaud.

‘I wish mine was,’ said Heloise.

‘Child, you talk nonsense! Child, you are a fool! Your grandmother is worth ten of you or me. She has strong political opinions, and is of the old fashion; but there are very few women in Europe like her.’

‘Very well, aunt,’ said Heloise: ‘I will submit, I never did anything else. How long is it since you saw her?’

‘Twenty-two years. I informed her that I had made a certain discovery. She most generously believed me, without waiting for

further proofs, and extended to me her full forgiveness.'

'*You* won't stand her,' said Heloise, 'I can tell you *that*. I will be all obedience, but it *is* hard that a poor girl like myself should find no protection in Europe. However,' she added to herself, 'the remedy is always in my own hands.'

A great friendship had arisen in this short time between Heloise and her aunt's ill-tempered maid, Rachel. Friendships of this kind are made up of similarities and contrasts. But, Victor Hugo apart, an old, cross, and ugly woman may have a strong friendship for a very young, well-tempered, and beautiful woman, if they have anything in common. Rachel was old, ugly, and cross; Heloise was young, beautiful, and very amiable. Rachel had, at the first, been strongly opposed to the introduction of

Heloise into the house, yet, now, she would have deserted her mistress to serve her. They had a *point d'appui*, these two. Rachel very quickly discovered, Suffolk woman as she was, that the French girl, Heloise, was a better housekeeper than she was herself. Heloise had never asserted herself in the kitchen, but when she had seen Rachel holding up her eyes over the iniquities and wastefulness of the London servants, she had answered with her eyes.

These demonstrations brought about, first, consultation, then, confidence. Heloise showed Rachel twenty things in French domestic economy which she never knew before, and Rachel was almost converted to the idea that the French were not idiots. Heloise was half English, however, and so, without withdrawing her allegiance to the British throne, Rachel was able to believe in

Heloise as the most charming person, next to the Princess of Wales. After this announcement of the coming of Mrs. Arnaud's mother, they had a slight confidence in the kitchen.

‘My grandmamma is coming, Rachel,’ said Heloise, and there is no more rest for us this side of the grave.’

‘That will be worse for you than for me, Miss; will it not? What sort of a lady is she?’

‘*Hein*, I do not know. At least, I cannot say. She is different with different people. She is not kind to me, but to my sister most kind. She loves money, and in my opinion comes here—’

Suddenly Heloise remembered that she was talking to a servant, and left off. In France things were different, she argued; in England no one talked with servants.

Rachel wished to continue the conversation, but Heloise was inexorable. Rachel, however, had heard as much as she chose to hear, and she was strongly prejudiced against Madame Mantalent, before she ever came into the house.

But the old lady arrived before affairs had in any way settled down, and before Mrs. Arnaud quite knew what she was about. Business was coming in in the most remarkable manner. Heloise and Mrs. Arnaud had not an hour to themselves. The receipts were enormous, *so large, in fact, that Mrs. Arnaud was at her wits' end to supply stock.* She was in an *embarras des richesses*. She must borrow some money soon, for she had spent all her own, and though people bought, it was on credit. Should she borrow of Lord Festiniog? that she did not wish to do. Drummond would

let her have any money she wanted, but that would not do by any means. Within a fortnight, she saw that she must expend more money in replenishing stock, and at the end of that time her mamma arrived from Paris, and relieved the garrison, not only with money, which might have been got elsewhere, but with taste and experience, which could have been got nowhere.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Arnaud's freedom, and that of Heloise, was gone once more. Madame was in her way a harder task-master than she had ever had before. At once, Rachel and Heloise had entered into a Holy Alliance against her, and Mrs. Arnaud, as an English woman, preserved an armed neutrality. She was amused to see the extraordinary confidence which was growing up between Heloise and Rachel: it was doubtless due to their hatred of the common enemy.

When she first came, Rachel was extremely astonished at Heloise's account of her, for she seemed a very agreeable old lady, who was most affectionately attentive to Mrs. Arnaud and most courteous to herself. But Rachel soon found out what was the matter with her, and groaned in spirit. It is difficult to explain why she drove every one mad, but we must endeavour to do so.

In the first place, she never stopped talking, which might have been got over, but then she never talked about anything in any way agreeable, or had a solitary good word for any one: she and her family were the most important people in the universe, and the world seemed to her to be in a combination against them. Then she would have everything explained to her at full length, of whatever nature it might be, and never by any chance allowed that any one

had done right. If the most trifling thing went wrong, it was because she had not been consulted about it : prove her wrong in any one thing and she would speak a quarter of an hour afterwards, exactly as if she was in the right. She was a prodigiously good housekeeper, and although she took none of the responsibility of the housekeeping herself, she never ceased talking about it to her daughter.

There she was, however, sitting in Mrs. Arnaud's easy chair and talking without ceasing on details of all kinds : about herself, about Mrs. Arnaud's relation with the late Iltyd, about the money she had lent her daughter (she never left *that* subject alone for above a quarter of an hour together), about the servants, about every kind of minute detail in the house. Always giving advice, offended when it was not taken, re-

turning to the charge until it was, and then turning on her daughter for a poor, silly, dear thing, if the matter went wrong. There she was, an old woman of the sea, with but one fact about her which gave any hope of escape from her, and that was her rheumatism.

It was after she had been there half of one day that this great fact about her was discovered. Heloise remembered it first, and, with her brilliant genius, saw hope.

Madame on the very first day shewed the weak point in her armour, and as we said before, Heloise, knowing her well, had hope. Madame was partly agreeable on the first day, but Heloise knew that she could be so, for her own purposes, after dinner, but knowing what would with ordinary luck occur, she said nothing, until Madame, who had been talking at her best, desired to go to bed, and asked where she was to sleep.

‘You sleep at the top of the house, grandmamma,’ said Heloise, promptly. ‘I shall sleep in the same room now—I have moved up—a very nice one. You must be tired, shall I take you to bed?’

‘At the top of the house,’ said Madame, aghast. ‘My dear Heloise, you know as well as I do, that I cannot walk up stairs.’

‘I do not know what is to be done, then, grandmamma : unless you take aunt Arnaud’s bed, and she sleeps in yours ; that is to say, in the same room with myself.’

‘I suppose that there is nothing else to be done,’ said Madame. ‘It is hard on a woman of my age, but I have always sacrificed myself to my children. I will sleep down stairs.’

The arrangement was most promptly made ; Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise departed upstairs, leaving the old lady in full possession of the back parlour and the bedroom

adjoining. The Emperor of Russia calculated the effect of cold on the French Army, but he had a long time to think about it. Heloise had but little time to think about her grandmamma's rheumatism, yet she utilized it in the most dexterous manner. She and her aunt were free at the top of the house, where no grandmamma could reach them.

Was it for better or for worse that that cunning old French woman was isolated in the lower part of the house with Rachel? That is a question which will answer itself.

To go on with our narrative. The coming of the old French woman sent Heloise and Mrs. Arnaud upstairs, leaving her to get through the night in the best way she could. Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise encamped in the apartments immediately above George Drummond's, and found peace and freedom.

CHAPTER XII.

BARRI.

MADAME never guessed what she had done on the very first day of her coming, by her temper and her rheumatism. She drove Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise into the third story. Heloise had foreseen this from the first, and had devotedly removed her own bed there, but she had held her tongue about her grandmamma's rheumatism, just to avoid discussion. She had also mentioned the third story, generally, as a 'bedroom,' whereas it was an excellent suite of rooms, slightly lower from floor to ceiling than the two other floors, but most comfortable in

every way, as the late tenant, Major Chutney, knew full well. Madame, however, had the intense pleasure of believing that her daughter and granddaughter were sleeping in an attic under the tiles.

The rooms were most excellently furnished, and so high over the street that the noise, such as there was in Hartley Street, was almost inaudible. Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise made themselves completely comfortable, and although meals were eaten in the back parlour downstairs, under the superintendence of Madame, who grumbled persistently at Rachel's cooking, still, more went on upstairs than ever she knew about. People desiring to see Mrs. Arnaud privately had only to knock at the private door, be let in by Rachel, and ascend to the sanctum at once.

Barri, the son of Lord Rhyader, was

one of the first visitors. Heloise, one morning, taking rest from the business and her grandmamma, was reading in the sitting room when Rachel announced Mr. Drummond and the young gentleman. Heloise rose, and saw George Drummond for the first time. He seemed, in an instant, startled and confused. She was woman, and Frenchwoman enough to know that it was at her own beauty. She liked it, and, what is more, she liked him. By his side was a handsome boy whom she did not know.

‘ I beg pardon, Mademoiselle, but Lord Rhyader asked me to convey my young friend here to see Mrs. Arnaud. Mr. Barri Arnaud, —Mademoiselle Heloise.’

‘ As if,’ Barri said, with his hands in his breeches pockets and his hat under his left arm ; ‘ a fellow of fourteen at Eton couldn’t find the way for himself, without

having the way shown him by a clerk in the Home Office, and that clerk, George Drummond. I assure you, Mademoiselle, that this man is a lunatic.'

'Barri,' said George Drummond, 'I will give you something that you will remember, directly.'

'All right, my boy. I shan't resist. I will wait until I am big enough, and then I will give it back.'

'Well, then, don't be impertinent, child.'

'Child, yes, I am a mere child, am I not, Mademoiselle?'

'Certainly, Monsieur, and I am fond of children.'

'Then just give a kiss if you please,' said Barri, and he at once took one. 'What would you have given for that?' he said to George.

Heloise was not in the least degree disconcerted. She laughed at George Drummond, keeping her hand on Barri's shoulder. 'He is to come here often, I hear,' she said. 'Shall you always come with him?'

'Certainly, if it gives me the pleasure I have now.'

'It is entirely mutual,' she replied, 'you will sit down until my aunt comes up. I have not met you before, and so I could never thank you for your great kindness to my aunt the first night she came here. Believe me, Mr. Drummond, that my aunt is a woman who requires the most delicate kindness, and those who show it to her shall have all that I can give them, my thanks.'

'There is no such woman in the world as Mary Arnaud,' said Barri; 'by Jove, here she is!' and the next moment he had his arms round her neck.

She looked as handsome as ever, and sank down in her easy chair with the same exquisite grace. 'I am so glad,' she said, 'that Barri has caused this new introduction between us, Mr. Drummond; though, indeed, I might have claimed your acquaintance after the first night we met, but I waited for you to move in what I hope may be a lasting acquaintance. Your father,' she continued, drawing Barri to her and stroking his hair, 'was very kind to me once, before I retired from the world. Until I left that retirement and saw him again, I was unaware that he had a son. Lord Festiniog and Lord Rhyader speak of you in such high terms that I shall be proud to know you, not as a lodger, but as a friend. Come and see us as often as you can, I am sure my niece will be glad to see you.'

'Assuredly, Monsieur will be welcome,

both for his own kindness to you, and for his father's.'

'The fact is,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'that my mother, Madame Mantalent, occupies the ground floor, and assists me, not only with capital, but with, what is far better, her experience and taste. She, however, is old, and dislikes visitors, so I can better receive my friends here.'

'She dislikes visitors so much,' said Barri, 'that she raises Cain because nobody ever comes to see her. I must go down and pay my respects before I come up again.'

'You had better not,' said Mrs. Arnaud; but youth is rash, and he was gone.

George Drummond took his leave after twenty minutes' conversation, during which he explained that Barri and he had an old friendship, arising out of a stay which he had

once made at Festiniog. But the deed was done ; he had entered that room an ambitious, careful, heart-whole man, with a dozen projects in his head for raising himself in the world. He left it with the same number of projects, but they were all now for another. His thoughts about his own future had passed away, except in so far as he might make a glorious future for Heloise.

Did she know it? Did she know that the man was walking and breathing in a different atmosphere to that in which he had existed half-an-hour ago? We think that she did.

He was a young man whom any one would have been proud of loving ; she could have loved him herself, had she not loved some one else. The most unfortunate fact was, that she had got into an awful entanglement elsewhere, and that she had told

Mrs. Arnaud such a Mississippi of lies at first, that she could now neither ask for her sympathy or advice, when she most needed them. She very nearly made a vow never to tell another story in her life, or only a certain number a day ; but when she saw how perfectly futile such a resolution would be, she gave up the idea ; for the little lady had, at least, this merit, that she knew her own character perfectly, and that though she deceived other people, she never deceived herself.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAMILY CONSULTATION.

LORD FESTINIOG, Lord Rhyader, Lady Rhyader, Mr. Drummond, and Mr. George Drummond sat down to dinner together : it was a family party, and more than one of them knew perfectly well that family affairs, and those only, were to be discussed.

Never having been in the ministry ourselves, we are unable to say what goes on at a meeting of cabinet ministers. We should be inclined to think that every one was either silent, or talked on indifferent matters, until the chief gave the key note. Then, we

should conceive, might follow a long and, sometimes, acrimonious argument, after the making up of which, her Majesty was advised. We know nothing about the matter, we only guess.

Every one present at Lord Festiniog's table knew perfectly well that Mrs. Arnaud and her relations were to be the subject of conversation. The gentle, and now middle-aged, Lady Rhyader knew the fact so well that she never offered to go away when the dessert was set on and the servants had withdrawn. She, in fact, relieved them all from the difficulty of beginning, by plunging *in medias res*.

‘Now that we are alone together, Lord Festiniog,’ she said—‘for I do not mind Mr. George Drummond—I wish to have a few words with you about Mrs. Arnaud.’

‘And why not?’ said Lord Festiniog.

‘That is no answer, sir. I want to know what you are going to do about her.’

‘I have acknowledged her as my daughter-in-law, and we ought to have her here.’

‘So I think. You have gone to such astounding lengths in this matter that you ought to go further; we ought not to do things by halves.’

‘Here’s a woman for you,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘has had the best dinner that money could buy, and then breaks out like this. What is the matter with you, Alice?’

‘Never you mind, sir. You give me a fair answer to a fair question, and don’t be diplomatic with *me*. I want to know what you are going to do about Mary.’

‘Oh! I see what you mean. You want me to tell the truth.’

‘ Exactly,’ said Lady Rhyader.

‘ Well, then, I will do anything you choose to propose.’

‘ And so on,’ said Lady Rhyader. ‘ Then you will ask her here.’

‘ Certainly. She was always, as it were, one of the family when we were alone. No one knew but that she was some poor relation.’

‘ And her mother and niece ?’

‘ Of course. I will do anything which I am asked to do, if I am asked civilly.’

‘ Well, then, I must civilly ask you not to have her mother and niece here. Do you understand ?’

‘ Why ?’

‘ I am mistress of this house, and I refuse to answer you. I will receive Mrs. Arnaud, but neither her mother nor her niece.’

‘ May I not plead for the niece, Madam ? ’
said George Drummond.

She rose and looked full at him ; then they all rose as she went upstairs. George Drummond was nearest the door and opened it for her. As she passed him she said three words only to him in a low tone, and then passed out.

A moment after a footman came in and whispered to George Drummond. He went out. Lady Rhyader was standing on the staircase waiting for him.

Mr. George Drummond,’ she said hurriedly, ‘ are you in love with that girl ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Then I will say no more. Is your decision irrevocable ? ’

‘ I fear so.’

‘ Then God help you, my poor boy,’ and so she left him.

When he came back to the dining-room it was obvious that they had been saying something in his absence. They had evidently been talking about him, and as he did not want to stop their conversation, he made a pretence of finishing a glass of wine, and went upstairs to Lady Rhyader. We will remain in the dining-room for the present.

‘Drummond,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘have you been to see the widow lately?’

‘No, my lord. I do not think that she wishes to see me.’

‘Want of taste on her part,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘for you are a handsome and agreeable fellow still, Drummond.’

‘If you flatter me, Lord Festiniog, I shall begin to be disagreeable.’

‘Don’t lose your temper, Drummond,

that was always your fault, as it was the fault of your father before you.'

'Well, you know that I cannot have much wish to see her. Our relations in old times were extremely painful.'

'True,' said Lord Festiniog, 'what a singular thing it is that she should settle in the very house where your son was lodging.'

'Well, that was my doing,' said Drummond. 'I sent her there.'

'That you might go and see her sometimes, eh?' said Lord Festiniog.

'No. I have no wish to see her until she asks me, and that is not likely.'

'Don't say anything more about that, father,' said Lord Rhyader. 'Is she likely to do well in this business, Drummond?'

'Yes. She will probably make her fortune; were it not so I should not have sent her there.'

‘Who on earth could it have been,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘who put her first on the truth about her being really married?’

‘Her mother, doubtless,’ said Drummond, looking Lord Festiniog straight in the face.

‘It most certainly was not the old lady, I should say,’ said Lord Rhyader. ‘At least, I do not think that it could have been. She never cared twopence about the matter; she thought that she had done her duty as a mother by pitching her daughter overboard. I saw her in Paris a year ago, and she was most affectionate to me. She did not harbour any ill will to her daughter, but extremely lamented her loss to the business. I don’t think that the old woman would have made or meddled in the matter. It must have been her brother who urged the rest of the family not to receive her.’

‘That is rather a lame conclusion, is it not?’ said Drummond, who knew fifty times more about the matter than Rhyader.

‘Possibly, but such is my instinct.’

‘Ay, but instincts are not business,’ said Drummond. ‘By the bye, talking of business, you have written to me to raise five hundred pounds for you. But you don’t tell me on what security: is it on post obit or what?’

The sum was really 5,000*l.*, but Drummond withheld that fact: he wanted to hold the whip hand of Lord Rhyader, and he thought that this was the best way of doing so. He was completely mistaken in his tactics, and liked father and son none the better for the fact.

‘You want money!’ said Lord Festiniog, laughing. ‘What *have* you been doing? A saint like you in the money market: that is

too good. Come, pass the wine and tell us all about it. This is the best thing I have heard for some time.'

'Well, sir, the fact is that I made a very foolish speculation. I am an avaricious man, and I put five thousand pounds in the Gulf Stream Company, believing that there was a subsidy. There is none, and I have lost my money : that is all.'

'Why did not you come to me instead of going to Drummond? Don't let us pay it, Rhyader, my boy. Let us see if we can dispute it in law. Drummond, just see if we have any chance, and Rhyader and I will fight it. Or, if you hate publicity, Gervase, of course I will pay it; but I ask you, as a favour, to let Drummond get counsel's opinion. A law suit would be immense fun.'

'I am bound both by gratitude, and by

duty to follow your directions, sir,' said Rhyader.

'Then hey! for a good law suit, I say. I will find the sinews of war, and Drummond shall find the talent. Now, let us go up to your wife and George Drummond, he is no bottle breaker. You should tell him to take wine in moderation, Drummond, or he being unused to it might get overtaken by it.'

'He has a will of his own in all matters, Lord Festiniog,' was all that Drummond said.

They went upstairs. Lady Rhyader was ready with coffee, but George Drummond had disappeared. Lady Rhyader, in answer to their enquiries, said that he had a bad headache, and was gone home. They thought nothing about the matter.

'Where is Barri?' said Lord Festiniog.
'He was not at dessert, and he is not here.'

‘He is at Mrs. Arnaud’s, I believe. Mr. George Drummond left him there, and said that he would walk home with him. The boy wants a balloon, to let up with the gas, and Mrs. Arnaud’s footman told him that he could tell him where to get one. He will be home soon.’

‘He is pretty familiar at Mrs. Arnaud’s, already,’ said Lord Festiniog.

‘Oh yes, he is there nearly every day. She treats him as if he were her own son. The boy is tiresome at home and I like his going there. He has a fancy for doing so, and I do not see why he should not.’

CHAPTER XIV.

DRUMMOND THE ELDER.

DRUMMOND left Lord Festiniog's very early, and on getting to his study, was extremely surprised to find his son there with his head buried in his hands before the fire. He at once saw that something was wrong, and he approached George Drummond and put his hand on his shoulder.

‘What is the matter, my boy?’ he asked.
‘What has Lady Rhyader said which has given you a headache?’

‘Now, you save me the trouble of coming to the point,’ said George Drummond. ‘She

has been saying things which I do not understand.'

'Well, tell me what she has said; if you cannot trust me, who can you trust?'

'Ay! but she says that you are the last man to be trusted; what am I to do if she says that again?'

'Tell her that she lies,' said Drummond, very quietly. 'No, you can't do that. But what has she been saying about me?'

'Well, I hardly like to tell you, father. We got in hot dispute over a certain matter, and lost our tempers. Then she said that you were the person who had put Mrs. Arnaud in possession of the facts of her marriage, and that you had set her on Lord Festiniog.'

'She is a clever little woman,' said Drummond, with an expression of admiration. 'She is perfectly right.'

‘Father, did you do that?’

‘Certainly, my son. You inherit all my property, and I have no idea of your marrying into a family with the curse of illegitimacy on it. You will marry Heloise, I suppose; at least, from what the boy Barri tells me, I should think it probable. If you decide on her, I wish her to be received into society. Barri tells me that you are *au mieux* with her, go on and prosper.’

The transparency of this falsehood never struck George Drummond. He could not possibly have known that George would ever see Heloise, when he told Mrs. Arnaud the truth; therefore, how could he have betrayed his client for such a purpose? George never saw that until afterwards.

‘I am in love with her, I confess, father, but she will never marry me. Lady Rhader told me all about it to-night; Heloise

knew my fellow lodger D'Arcy, in Paris, most intimately. She has followed him here.'

'That is an outrageous untruth,' said Drummond. 'What else did Lady Rhyader say?'

'She said that the whole thing between them was notorious in Paris, and that Madame Mantalent had in reality only come over to bring him to book.'

'Now listen to me, George,' said the elder Drummond. 'Lady Rhyader is as incapable of telling lies intentionally as you are, but she believes them. All this story about D'Arcy is false, from beginning to end, by whom told I do not know. The whole thing is a fiction. I have got the key to it, but I don't know the whole truth. I will go and see the old woman to-morrow, and get it out of her. Now look here, boy, I have watched Mrs. Arnaud all her life, and

I know everything about her and her relations. I tell you that there never was anything in the world between D'Arcy and Heloise. Will that satisfy you?'

'Well, no. I am afraid that there is something between them.'

'I will look into that for you. I fancy that you are wrong. I conceive that there is a confidence between them, but that it is about some other person I don't know. I will get it out of the old woman to-morrow.'

'What, Madame Mantalent?' said George: 'she is a difficult customer, I fancy.'

'Fiddle!' said Drummond: 'ask her how much money she owes me; she will cast her old wig on the fire.'

'Owe you money?'

'Yes, boy. Like all Frenchwomen, she speculated under the Empire, and I, having

certain designs in hand, made friends with her, and lent certain sums to her. She has naturally not repaid them, though she could do so if she chose. I will just go to her to-morrow, and hear what she has to say. The threads of a very vast matter are in my hands, George; when I have got them together I will use my power for your interest.'

'But, father, you are scheming about something. Pause, and think how happy we might be without any attempt to go higher in the world.'

'Who told you that I was scheming?'

'Your face. I know it well; you are hiding something from me.'

'I am.'

'Confide to me, father.'

'I cannot, I have committed a great crime, and I dare not tell you of it.'

‘Why?’

‘Because you would cast me away as the dirt under your feet, if I told you.’

‘Father! father! why should you say that to me? Of myself I say nothing. I have tried to do my duty by you, and you will allow that I have never failed in it.’

‘Never for a moment,’ said Drummond.

‘As for your duty to me, what can I say about that? why I have not words to express what I owe you. No man had ever such a father as you have been to me. Believe me, that I love and trust you beyond all living men, and that everything which you say to me is sacred. Let me share your sorrow or your crime; do not, after so many years of kindness, entirely repel me from your heart.’

‘You are talking like a madman,’ said Drummond, ‘and you are driving me mad. I cannot say any more to-night. You shall marry the girl if money can do it, but I will not urge you to marry her if she loves someone else. Now, go home to Number Seventeen, look up Madame Mantalent if she is not gone to bed, and tell her that I am coming to see her to-morrow. You may say that I want 1,500*l.* of her, and that will make her civil.’

‘But, father,’ said George Drummond, recurring to the very singular revelation which Mr. Drummond had made; ‘won’t you confide in me?’

Drummond looked at him pensively for a minute, and then said, ‘I cannot do it, my boy. I cannot part with you, at least, not yet.’

‘But, father, I would go to the scaffold

for you. Lay your hand on my heart, and see how true it beats.'

'Go away, old boy.'

'Father, I would almost give up Heloise for your sake.'

'No, by no means. You must know nothing. I have an object to gain, and then—'

'And what then?'

'Would you do anything which I asked you?'

'Why, of course I would.'

'Murder?'

'Why no,' said George Drummond, laughing. 'But I would do anything to oblige you. Well, now, I will really go; I shall bring you to confidence some day,' and he went.

Drummond the elder sat over the fire, and thought deeply but without any result.

Undecided in purpose he had always been : he was never more so than now, when he held the cards in his hands, or at least thought that he did so.

He never had been married, save once for a very short time. He had lived with more than one woman for a time, but he had never loved one of them : the only woman he had ever cared for in his life was Mrs. Arnaud ; and she seemed as far away from him as ever. In fact, she seemed to get a growing dislike to him. He had asked himself often why this was, and now he began to see the answer.

She was a woman of singular loyalty and truthfulness in *her* way ; although she had a latent genius for fiction, scarcely inferior to that of Heloise, which she only used when required by extreme necessity ; and she could not trust him.

It was he that had made love to her during the time that he was married. It was he who, for the sake of putting her under an obligation, had found out the fact of her having been married. He had betrayed Lord Festiniog in doing this, and had been false to him about it since. But he had got no nearer to Mrs. Arnaud's heart. She despised him for the treachery which had benefited her.

His affection for George Drummond was singularly strong. A lonely man all his life, George Drummond, with his innocence and talent, both as boy and as man, had been a great pleasure to him. He wanted to do that young man a great service, and himself a greater. He wished to marry Mrs. Arnaud even though she hated him. It seems strange, but it was so ; we see the thing every day if we look for it. His last chance for

gaining his object was in George Drummond—and in murder. It is no use disguising the fact. A certain life, as he thought, stood between him and his object ; and that life must go. There was no actual necessity for it, but a secret which will leak out soon about him will account for his folly. He could never think on a certain subject consecutively.

Yet in most things he was a respectable man. He had an excellent practice and a most excellent income. He had more business than he knew how to get through with ; yet it was observed, by those *who* cared about his affairs, that he had not made his son a lawyer but a gentleman, as if the two things were totally incompatible, which, we are happy to say, is not the case. He had not used his son's great talents by educating him for the law, and taking him into practice.

He had other designs for him, and his business friends thought him a fool, for George Drummond could have made the business twice what it was. 'Why, then, was he kicking his heels at the Home Office?' they asked.

Her father desired no confidant in his business; it is the oldest story in the world. One man was mad about one woman, and there was a wild and ever fading chance of her, through carefully planned assassination.

'If I fail in that,' he said, 'I will kill her, and then myself. I am not sure that I had better do both those things this very night. I would do it, only I have some lingering superstition about the next world. However, the cub shall go. That will pave the way.'

'How on earth shall I ever get into the household? There will be the difficulty. If

I could only get them to Italy I could do it, or rather she could ; but there is no chance of it.'

The dexterous, keen-headed lawyer was left without any power of decision whatever.

Murder 'tirled at the pin,' but the murder must be done by another hand ; and there was only one which he could command. It never struck the man that wealth, honour, and virtue would be in the end too strong for him. Least of all did it strike him that Nature would in this case invade civilisation, and solve the matter in her own peculiar way.

Let him disappear for the present, ready for any mischief, but not quite sure of his means. Charged with 100 lb. of compressed gun cotton, let us leave him to go off under the bottom of that very safe ship the 'Festiniog.'

CHAPTER XV.

MOVEMENTS AT NUMBER SEVENTEEN.

THE pleasant and almost whimsical life of Mrs. Arnaud went on. She had seen trouble, and serious trouble, nay, had been close upon tragedy. Now, however, her ship was sailing with a perfectly fair wind in a tolerably smooth sea. If any one had told her of great danger, she would have smiled; had any one told her that the quiet middle-aged lawyer Drummond was prepared to blow her and others into the air, she would have laughed.

There was a great attraction towards Number Seventeen, to all the people we have

mentioned. Barri began to discover that he was one of the most popular persons in the establishment. Mrs. Arnaud had always been fond of him. Heloise liked him because he was impudent and handsome, and because she could get anything out of him which she chose. Rachel liked everything young, and so liked him. The maid liked him because he made love to her, and the footman liked him because he was told off to take him to toy shops, and so escaped much of his duty. Toy shops we said: say rather the theatres at the morning performance and the Crystal Palace itself. Barri and Mrs. Arnaud's young footman saw a great deal of life together.

Not that Barri was ever out after dark. Lady Rhyader was very particular on that subject, as was also Mrs. Arnaud. The heir to a vast fortune was not to be trifled with,

more particularly, because in case of anything happening to the boy Barri, there was no possible heir, and the title was extinct. The boy was treated by all as though he was a moss rose done up in silver paper. And he knew his value too; his father and mother Rhyader, were answerable for that.

He was a very good little fellow, affectionate, shrewd beyond belief, but overgrown and not over-strong. He seemed to take mostly to George Drummond, Mrs. Arnaud and Madame Mantalent; and one charming fact about Barri was, that he always carefully repeated in one society what he had heard in another.

‘How do you do, Madame Mantalent?’ he would say, dashing into the back parlour, the same room in which Mrs. Arnaud had undergone her penance on the first night of her arrival.

And 'Comment vous portez-vous, petit vaurien?' would madame reply.

'You are not polite, madame,' replied Barri. 'What a pity it is that your rheumatism does not allow you to go upstairs.'

'Why, monsieur.'

'There is better fun upstairs than there is down here. I say, Madame Mantalent.'

'Well.'

'Is Heloise going to marry D'Arcy or George? Because she seems to be setting her cap at both. Grandpa says that Mrs. Arnaud will ultimately marry Mr. Drummond. Now a woman with such a noble wig as yours ought to have some sense under it. If I was in your place I should set them all right.'

So the boy went away, and the old woman prepared to make herself disagreeable to Lord Festiniog. She wrote him a

letter which she knew would bring him, and began packing for a journey to Paris.

He arrived at the most busy time of the afternoon: he was uncertain as to which way he had better get at her, and like many people who deliberate he took the most foolish course. He went into the shop.

He had no time to ask for her. She bore down on him full sail, threw her arms round his neck, kissed him and addressed him in the most friendly and affectionate terms before every one; then with an enormous amount of loudly expressed anxiety, she swept him into the parlour, leaving the whole affair to be talked of all over London for the next week, and find what solution it could.

She had succeeded in her object of publicly annoying him; now she took a turn at him in private. If the unhappy noble-

man had anything to say for himself, she gave him no time to say it. She had called him there by a letter which urged private matters of the highest interest as the object of the interview. The private and confidential matter was that Mrs. Arnaud's footman was teaching Barri to drink, and that she as a mother could not depart for Paris without telling his lordship of the state of the case. Her daughter, she said, was a fool and a most ungrateful fool, as silly and weak now as she was when she married that brigand looking son of his, Iltyd. (She had never seen him, and he was of a singularly frank and pleasing aspect.) Next she said that she was going to Paris because she could not stay any longer in a house where such things went on, as were going on upstairs. D'Arcy and

George Drummond were both in love with Heloise, and her ingrate of a daughter favoured George Drummond, while Heloise herself was attached to D'Arcy. So she scolded on and in the course of time came to George Drummond's father. The son, according to her, was a disreputable spend-thrift, but he was a saint to Drummond himself. She had been forced to borrow money of him in consequence of the ruin brought on her by her daughter's alliance with his family, and what interest she paid on it she declined to tell ; his lordship would not believe it if she did. (As she did not pay any interest at all, and as Drummond had no earthly security for it, Lord Festiniog would have been extremely surprised had he known that such a shrewd person as Drummond had let her have it on such

terms, even though he did happen to admire her daughter.)

Now, all this affected Lord Festiniog very slightly, he trusted Mary Arnaud, George, and the boy perfectly well, though he had not yet made any great acquaintance with George, whom Rhyader still disliked. The old woman, whose object was simply to make every one uncomfortable, through the head of the family, saw this, and shot her last bolt, which hit.

She said that she had the greatest dislike to betray her own daughter, but that she would never see a viper plotting against Lord Festiniog's peace of mind, now that he had done justice to her old, and hitherto respectable family. Then, she finally, and beyond doubt, proved to him, what she knew was the truth, that Drummond was a traitor

to him, that it was he who had told Mrs. Arnaud of the legality of her marriage.'

'Can you prove that, madame?' said he.

'Tax *him* with it: or, stay milord, tax *her* with it, and see what answer either of them dares to give.'

'I am very much obliged to you for your information, madame, which I am sure is given with the best intentions. May I ask you the favour of the loan of one of your rings?'

Madame made the *emprunt* with the greatest alacrity, and was so eager to get the ring off, that in the struggle she gave herself a muscular strain in the back: the effect of this was, that she accompanied the presentation of the ring by a wild and dismal howl, such as only rheumatism can produce.

The unpitying and brutal, insular old

booby (that was what she called him to herself), took no notice of her yell, and departed with the ring, returning almost immediately with another in addition, of which he begged her acceptance. As, next to dress and mischief making, she liked jewellery better than anything else in the world, she would have risen and embraced Lord Festiniog, but she was afraid of another rick in her back ; because she knew that when one came, another was pretty sure to follow, and it would not have done for her to have given a war-whoop just as she was kissing him. She therefore gave him her benediction and put on her ring, after which they parted with mutual satisfaction, and saw one another no more in this world.

Lord Festiniog ascertained from Heloise that Mrs. Arnaud was upstairs alone. He went up by himself, and found her sitting

by the window resting. When she saw him she came towards him with her old, frank, pleasant smile. He was half disarmed before he opened his mouth, but she saw that there was a cloud on his face, and she took his hands and looked wonderingly into it.

‘Mary,’ he said ‘have you always been frank with me?’

‘Yes,’ she said with a pause; ‘I think so.’

‘Who was it who told you of your marriage, and set you on me?’

‘Oh! you have found *that* out,’ she said. ‘Well—I am not at all sure that I am sorry. I do not ask you who told you, only you can bear me out that I did not. I bound myself in honour to him, and even now his name is not mentioned.’

‘Nor shall it be,’ said he: ‘do you trust him?’

‘No! he put me in possession of the fact in hopes that I would marry him. I need not say what answer I gave.’

‘Do you think he has some scheme in hand still, of which you are the object?’

‘I fancy so, but I cannot tell what it is. He has two pair of eyes on him now, however, yours and mine. Sit down and let us talk a little more. You have been with my mother; what sort of a character has she given me?’

‘The character of a poor weak saint, surrounded on all sides by harpies and villains. Your footman, I gather, is teaching Barri to drink; your lodgers are quarrelling about your niece; I forget the rest.’

‘What a shame! the young man is an excellent young man, and as for my lodgers quarrelling about Heloise, they are very good friends, and I hope will remain so. I

admit them both, certainly, D'Arcy because he knew Heloise in Paris, and George Drummond because he is here with Barri, who thinks him the best of created beings, after his own family, of course.'

'Are either of them *épris* with Heloise?'

'I fancy both of them, to a certain extent. But you must remember that I should be the last person to see to what extent. Before me, of course, there is nothing but politeness.'

'What do you think of George Drummond?' said Lord Festiniog.

'I like him amazingly, now. I did not care much for him at first; his manner is cold, but when the crust of him is got through, you will not find a more affectionate or warm-hearted fellow anywhere. I wish you would see more of him. He is such an admirable companion for Barri, and the boy takes to him.'

‘Barri and he are old friends, and I will see more of him. But Rhyader says that he is such a prig.’

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘Gervase ought to know better about that matter than I can pretend to do, for he is the king of prigs himself. I cannot say that I find George Drummond to be anything of the sort. I should pass *him* as a gentleman.’

‘Would you pass Rhyader as one, Mary?’

‘Well—h’m—yes, I suppose so. Much as I would pass you. I think Rhyader, by his birth and position, fancies that he can take liberties which would not be allowed to other people. You do it yourself, you know, and it is not to be tolerated.’

‘Well, Mary, I will not do it any more : let us be friends.’

‘By all means. I desire nothing more.’

I thought we were, for we have gone through much together with only one quarrel. Surely we are friends. But stay a moment, before you go. Are you aware that Rhyader and his wife distrust Drummond ? ’

‘ I have a suspicion of it, but I do not like to talk about it, it causes words. He is a good man of business, and I do not wish to part with him. He was shamefully served by his wife, but I fear he has served one woman, at least, very badly. Did you ever hear of a woman called Perrot ? ’

‘ No. Stay ! My servant at Leghorn and at Ravenna married a Frenchman called Perrot. I wonder if it is the same woman. ’

‘ It does not matter much, ’ said Lord Festiniog. ‘ She was dunning me for money, saying that she knew something. I sent her to Drummond as my legal adviser. Since then she has been very quiet ; and Drummond

has confessed to me that he was in intimate relations with her at one time.'

'So he was,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'She was my maid. I should like to see her again. She was with me when my poor child died. She was with me during the whole of that horrible fever at Ravenna. I really should like to see the woman.'

'Well, it is possible that you may, if she ever wants any money,' said Lord Festiniog. 'What do you say to my going?'

'You may go if you like, but I would much rather that you stayed. Stay ten minutes, will you?'

'Why, yes. The sight of your honest handsome face would make me stay any time.'

'Quite so, and we will consider the rest understood. I want you to see a face more pleasant than mine.'

‘That of Heloise?’

‘I do not say no to that. But the face I wish you to see just now is of another kind. It is familiar to you, and yet you seem scarcely to know it.’

‘Who is it?’

‘George Drummond. He is down stairs, let me fetch him and leave you to talk to him.’

‘I have no objection; but with what object?’

‘I wish to bring you together, that is all.’

‘Let him come if you like,’ he replied, and she went. George Drummond was not long in coming.

‘Well, George,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘that mysterious Mrs. Arnaud says that she wants me to see more of you. I suppose I must, for she always has her own way.’

‘I shall only be too happy to see as much of your lordship as you choose,’ said George : ‘for one reason if for no other.’

‘And that?’

‘And that is, that I have a very great affection for Barri Arnaud, and I think that I have more influence over him than anyone else, an influence which I need not tell you I should use for good. The boy has high purposes, which it does not seem to me any of his family understand. He is a petulant, spoilt boy, but with a great deal of good in him. I wish that I was his tutor ; in fact I wish that I was anything but what I am ; and if I might see more of the boy I might prevent his life from being ruined as mine has been : nay, I could not do that, but he would be a companion to me in my unutterable desolation.’

‘But *George Drummond*,’ said Lord

Festiniog: 'what is the use of talking in this manner? There is not a young man in England with finer prospects. Your father is rich, you are an only son; he tells me the scheme he has thought out so shrewdly for your future. He says that you have accepted that future, and have great ambition; there is nothing to prevent your being an ambassador, or, if you choose to spend your cash in that way, a member of parliament.'

'A month ago, my lord, I had high purposes: now I have simply none.'

'Ah!' said Lord Festiniog; 'I see. Mademoiselle Heloise has been asked if she will share your future, and prefers a military life;—is that it?'

'No, I have not spoken to her, as I know it would be hopeless. I have seen too much.'

'Well, perhaps she does like some one

else better—that cannot be helped, can it?’

‘No, but life is valueless to me.’

‘Well,’ said Lord Festiniog, ‘if anyone had told me this, I would certainly not have believed it. A sensible young fellow like you to talk this to me. Why, man, you have scarcely seen her a month, and you can’t be so hard hit as all this comes to. I have been ten times worse off than ever you have. You will get over it, man (*I have, twice*), and wonder why you were ever such a fool.’

George Drummond politely declined to allow the possibility of his ever getting over it, or of his ever putting faith in woman again.

‘Then there is something you do not choose to tell me about,’ said Lord Festiniog.

George Drummond was obliged to confess that there was.

‘Then I will ask no more questions. I am sorry for you. If you like to make love to Barri to console yourself, I will use my influence in your favour. Rhyader does not like you as he ought to, yet, but he soon will if I abuse you to him ; the heir to the throne is always in opposition you know. Lady Rhyader, I think, is as fond of you as she is of any one : the Ormerods are never demonstrative. If you repeat carefully everything which we say against one another behind each other’s backs you will soon be the most trusted friend in the family circle. Well, good-bye, don’t be down-hearted. Come whenever you like. I think that I shall make sure of a warm welcome for you.’

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERY OF D'ARCY AND HELOISE.

THERE was something more about Heloise than George Drummond had chosen to tell Lord Festiniog. A very black suspicion about her had been unfortunately confirmed beyond all manner of doubt, in his mind, and he did not care whether he lived or died. We have a hesitation in explaining what the matter was, yet we must do so, or the reader will be as much puzzled as George Drummond was; and what is worse, will think that there is something wrong, something which should not be told, in the most innocent and romantic business in the world.

‘D’Arcy had met in London, and very much admired, a certain young lady of very high birth and fortune. He thought that he was very much in love with her, and he followed her to Paris. She liked him well enough, but there was but little chance of her family consenting to her marriage with a comparatively poor man like D’Arcy. Still, opposition only made them like one another more, and they came to a clandestine correspondence.

Heloise was at this time in Brittany. The young lady was so closely watched by her friends, that correspondence was difficult. But a French friend in whom D’Arcy confided, informed him of what was pretty well known elsewhere: namely, that Madame Mantalent of the Rue St. Honoré, had for many years managed affairs of that kind for

her customers, and charged for her services proportionately in her bill.

‘She will not undertake an affair, you know,’ said his French friend. ‘The old woman is a dragon of virtue. But for an honourable matter like yours, she is the most convenient and sensible person in Paris, which is the same thing as saying in the universe. Still you must pay, my child, and you say that you are not rich.’

‘Oh! I am tolerably well off,’ said D’Arcy: ‘but how do you manage with the old woman?’

‘Let me look at your pocket-handkerchief,’ said his French friend. ‘Bah!’ he said ‘this is not in the fashion at all: I would not ask my valet to dust his boots with it. You must have a new set, and, like all the world, have them embroidered at the corner with your monogram. All the world does

it, and Madame Mantalent has a *spécialité* for such work : they will cost you 35 francs a-piece, but you must pay to win.'

'Good, and what next?' said D'Arcy.

'Why, you get into discussion with Madame, you pay beforehand, and give her one of your own handkerchiefs for a pattern: in that handkerchief is the letter you wish forwarded. It will reach its destination.'

'How?'

'Faith, how am I to say? It is her business, not mine. She gets her share out of the young lady, also. She gets much expensive custom in this way, that is all I know. Only, mind that you never make an appointment to meet the young lady, or she will denounce you at once.'

'But how does she know what there is in the letters she passes on?'

'How does she know?' said the French-

man, contemptuously. 'Do you suppose that she does not read every word of them before she sends them? Why, if anything wrong were discovered with her hand in it, it would ruin her, easy-going as we are in Paris.'

D'Arcy's expensive friendship with Madame Mantalent was begun in this way. His suit did not very greatly prosper, for he never had the chance of meeting the young lady in private, and, warned by his friend's experience, he never dared to hint at such a thing in a letter. His acquaintance with Madame become more expensive after a short time, for Heloise returned from Brittany, and he was thrown against her in the course of business.

From that moment the young lady was forgotten. He grew cool with a rapidity for which even she could not account; but

in reality she was not broken-hearted as she had seen someone who was much richer, and whom she liked better. D'Arcy's affections had been transferred to Heloise, and in talking to her about his passion for the young lady for whom he cared no longer, he got into the most confidential relations with her.

What should have made her love him so suddenly? Who can say? There was not much in the man; he was handsome and agreeable; he talked French well; he dressed well. He was only an Englishman after all: yet there was a *je ne sais quoi* about him which made him more attractive to her than any other man she had ever seen. She had plenty of young Frenchmen who paid her attention, and who were better dressed and better mannered than he was. Yet she chose him from among them

all. For his wealth? no: he was not singularly rich. For his beauty? why he had only the ordinary good looks of a well-trained and bred Englishman. For his talents? he was not very clever, he could hold his own and no more. She was stupid, save in her exquisite power of management, most half-educated Frenchwomen—we shall be getting into trouble—what we were going to say is that most half-educated women of all nations seem stupid, because they have no facts to reason from. She was stupid, we repeat; and he knew more than she did. On occasion he could tell her of things which had never been told her during her convent education. The young Frenchmen who had paid her attention could make themselves more agreeable than D'Arcy ever did. Yet there was the *je ne sais quoi* about him—and—she fell in love with him.

He came and went for some time. Her time with her grandmother was not a pleasant one. She was a woman of business, and she calculated D'Arcy's affairs. They were sufficient for her, and in the end he asked her to be affianced to him: she consented.

At about this time, her aunt Arnaud, who was seldom spoken of in the family, began the fight with Lord Festiniog, which ended in her recognition. Madame Mantalent at once took her daughter's part, as far as she could, though she could do little for her daughter save vituperation, which did Mrs. Arnaud no good at all. Even before Mrs. Arnaud was recognised, Madame Mantalent on Heloise's proposition that she should go to England to help her aunt, gave her ready consent. It is no use repeating what we have hinted at previously.

But matters between D'Arcy and Heloise had gone very far. She told him that her aunt was taking such and such a house, that it was probable that she would be sent for to help in the business, and so'on. D'Arcy went to London and took the lodgings. He came into them only a week before Mrs. Arnaud.

Her position was extremely difficult. The fact was that D'Arcy had married Heloise in Paris, and neither of them dared confess the fact to any human being. He dared not confess it to his family, nor she to hers. They were man and wife, however, according to all laws, human and divine.

She came with a smiling face to assist Mrs. Arnaud in the business. She assisted her in the noblest manner, and she sat, like a little Burgundian as she was, opposite Mrs. Arnaud day after day, and

night after night, wondering when she would get the courage to tell the truth. Then, her grandmother came, and frightened her still more. And George Drummond came and fell in love with her, which made a complication which was beyond her powers to solve.

D'Arcy behaved very well. He began to wish that the marriage should be known to his family, but she begged him, for a time, to say nothing about it, unless—certain contingencies should occur. He agreed to that ; but in concealed marriages things are apt to be misunderstood by those not in the possession of the real facts.

George Drummond and D'Arcy had made a sort of friendship together. George had been the oldest lodger in the house, and, during the interregnum between Mrs. Morsey and Mrs. Arnaud, had naturally made ac-

quaintance with him, as a newly arrived lodger. George had had no special information from his father about Mrs. Arnaud; such as he had he gave to D'Arcy. There was no need for two young men to talk about family affairs in any way. They neither of them had a *point d'appui*, they simply made friends. Mrs. Arnaud came, and they talked of her. Heloise came, Madame came, Lord Festiniog came and Barri. George Drummond and D'Arcy talked over them all in the most free and easy manner. More freely possibly after the advance of Madame sent them upstairs into Mrs. Arnaud's rooms, where George Drummond was free to meet Heloise, and D'Arcy was free to meet his wife.

George Drummond had determined for some little time to ask D'Arcy about his love for Heloise. He had delayed doing so

because he was afraid. He saw that they admired one another.

Yet it would be better surely to speak to him about it. He resolved to do so, and at ten o'clock one night he came down to D'Arcy's rooms, to speak about the matter.

D'Arcy was not in his sitting-room, but the door of his bedroom was open. There were two people talking and laughing there, one of them was D'Arcy, the other Heloise. D'Arcy was sitting in a chair, and Heloise was standing behind him, brushing his hair. George slid out of the room without making a sound.

Life was now of no value to him. Look at it for yourself, reader; conceive how unutterably horrible it would be in your own case, and think well of him. In some men such a thing would have produced brutality, ferocity: in him it only produced heroism;

and, we think, heroism of the highest kind.

With D'Arcy and Heloise we will trouble you very little. We do not think that there is anything very much to trouble about with them. We only ask you to go forward with George Drummond.

CHAPTER XVII.

GEORGE DRUMMOND TAKES CHARGE OF BARRI.

ALL things, as the Scotch say, seemed to be put past him. He had never loved any woman but Heloise, and she—it was not to be borne, and yet it must be. That that frank, beautiful creature should be unfit to be named, was horrible. Yet, she was talking familiarly to his friend in his friend's bedroom. He had seen it with his own eyes; he saw it through the open door, against his will. She was in his bedroom, brushing his hair, late at night. French manners might be free, but never so free as that. To us, who know the truth, the matter is harmless enough, but to him it was unbearable.

He also heard her say to him, 'You have inked your cuff again, you very imbecile noodle, you lay your pen down on the desk, and then put your arm in the ink. You are incomparably foolish.'

So it was all over, as he told Lord Festiniog. It was necessary to shape out some new life for himself.

What career was there conceivable for him? What should he do now? He had partially failed at the university, and he had hopelessly failed in love. Could he trust a woman after his experience of Heloise? He thought not. He put women aside altogether, and thought, once more, of a career in life.

But for whom? As a totally unselfish person he could not decide.

He had got to be very fond of Mrs. Arnaud, but, when all was said and done, what was she? A handsome milliner,

nothing more. Yet, sometimes, he remembered that she had ventured to kiss him, and that he liked her doing so. He rambled on in idle thought of this kind, and ended by wishing that he was king of England: under which circumstances he fancied that he could put all things right. Then he went to sleep, and was awakened late in the morning by Barri rousing him out of bed with Mrs. Arnaud's dog, and requesting to be taken to the Crystal Palace, dog and all.

He took Barri to the Crystal Palace, and they had a long day together. It was after this that he spoke to Lord Festiniog. That excellent old man gave him all the comfort in his power, but it was none. He moped and brooded by himself a great deal, dreading to meet either D'Arcy or Heloise, who seemed also to avoid him. As for Mrs. Arnaud, though he liked her, and she liked

him, he dared not be much with her after what he had discovered about her niece. The responsibility was too heavy. He made a certain discovery, also, without interchanging a word. That woman Rachel knew what was going on between D'Arcy and Heloise: she looked so guiltily at him. Yet, could *he* speak and warn Mrs. Arnaud? He was the very last man who could possibly do so.

The boy Barri had always taken very kindly to him, and now they got greater friends than ever. Lord Festiniog had said to George Drummond that he would abuse George to Rhyader, in order to make sure that that gentleman would get to like him in consequence. He did nothing of the kind, however, but praised George so steadily that Lord and Lady Rhyader saw much more of him, and got to appreciate him.

He was very much with them after a

short time. The truth which he supposed that he knew about Heloise drove him from Number Seventeen almost entirely, and he found in his new friends, who had been old acquaintances, people much more kindly and agreeable than he had ever thought. He never mentioned his terrible disappointment, but Lord Festiniog hinted enough about it to make them pity him, and to render them very kind to him.

He seemed to make a home at Festiniog house; and his father approved of his doing so. Drummond said that George would get into good society, might make a man of the world, might make useful friends, might, in fact, do everything except what he, Drummond, wished to be done.

What was that? Time only can tell.

George saw his father frequently; and the more he saw of him, the more he was

puzzled. His father, Drummond, who had always been frank and kind to him, now became a perfect sphinx. He tried to talk to him about strange things; things which George had never heard of before. He said something so very odd one day that George came to the conclusion that his father was getting a little mad, and that he could not trust him.

It was a curious thing for a son to do about his father, but he did it. He consulted Lord Festiniog. He asked that gentleman if he could tell him anything about his grandfather.

Lord Festiniog was very loath to say anything at first, and wished to change the subject. But George Drummond stuck to his point, and at last Lord Festiniog told him the truth.

‘My dear young friend,’ he said. ‘Pro-

vidence afflicts in various ways. You ask about your grandfather. Will you ask about mine?’

‘No, my lord.’

‘Very well, then, I suppose I must tell you about both of them. My grandfather was a hopeless criminal, a man who, in these purer times, is never named. Yours, my poor boy, was a lunatic, and died in Bedlam.’

‘Have you ever, my lord, seen any symptoms of lunacy in my father?’

‘No,’ said Lord Festiniog. ‘Madness misses a generation. It is your turn, not his.’

‘I think that my turn has come, for there are matters which I cannot understand.’

‘There is no doubt about that,’ said Lord Festiniog. ‘I should conceive that you were as mad as a hatter. I am not excessively sane, myself: in fact, I fancy

that I am going mad. Do not you think that a little change would be good for you? it might keep off the disease, you know. What is it, after all? merely congenital tubercular disease of the brain; I expect that I have got it. Now, we will talk no more nonsense. What do you think of me, George?’

‘I think of you—well, give me time—I think of you first as a kind patron.’

‘Yes, but what more?’

‘What more?’ said George Drummond, ‘that is a curious question. Do you mean personally?’

‘Yes.’

‘I think of you as a very excellent nobleman. As a radical myself,’ he said, smiling, ‘I object to noblemen theoretically, but I go as far as to say that I think that if all noblemen were like yourself, we should

require no Reform Bills. But then, you see they are not.'

'Quite so,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you will get over this radicalism in time : if you do not, it will sit very pleasantly on you. Well, now, I see you trust me, and will do as I ask you. I want you to do something for me.'

'It is done, my lord.'

'No, it is not, George. It has to be done.'

'Mention it then.'

'Take away this boy Barri for us. Be his tutor. Get him entirely out of the way, and answer for his life with your own.'

'This is very puzzling, my lord.'

'Yes, as a matter of course it is puzzling,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you need hardly remark that. I want you to take away this boy, for a time, until I can see into matters.'

‘What matters, my lord?’

‘I really hardly know myself,’ said he.

‘I could not do anything without my father’s consent, my lord.’

‘Who asked you? I only ask you to take the boy away while I deal with the woman.’

‘What woman?’

‘I am coming to that: now, I have been appealed to by two young people to break a matter to you, and ask your confidence. You had reason to suspect that a flirtation was on between D’Arcy and Heloise.’

‘How could you know that?’

‘Rachel, the spy and confidant, saw you coming from D’Arcy’s room on one occasion. She informed them of the fact, and, after considerable deliberation, they came to me as one having some weight, and asked me to

break the truth to you. They were married in Paris four months ago.'

'Married! And does Mrs. Arnaud know?'

'Not a word. I am to have the inestimable privilege of telling her, when Mrs. D'Arcy overcomes her almost unreasonable repugnance to my doing so.'

'Well!' he said with a sigh, 'I am glad that she was honest. But, however, the sooner I am away, the better.'

'I am glad that you see that. She is a good young woman, of whom you should never think again. I don't exactly see, now, that I know all, what there is in her; but she drives the young fellows mad.'

'Well!'

'“Well,” is not much to say to a man in my position. You should say, “Well, my lord,” or, “I profoundly appreciate and

esteem your lordship's confidence," or, "you are an old noodle and are frightening yourself about nothing : " anything but " well." '

' I don't know what you are driving at, my lord.'

' How, on earth, can I tell you if I do not know myself? I cannot confide to Rhyader and his wife, they would either laugh at me, or have a series of fits, or do something or another ridiculous. I want the boy taken away, and I want you to do it.'

' Is there any danger to him? '

' I think so. I have received anonymous letters which puzzle me. It seems a very strange thing for an old man like myself to tell you in broad daylight, in this most prosaic and, I might say, police-ridden town, London—but I fear that the boy's life is in danger.'

‘That is very strange. My dear lord, you must have some reason for speaking. Is it not some scheme to extort money?’

‘Why, apparently not: that is one of the puzzles of it: not a stiver of money has been demanded of me. I am only warned that the boy’s life is in danger, and that he had better be got out of London.’

‘But no one can have any interest in the boy’s harm. It seems absurd to ask, but you positively have no other heir?’

‘None. The boy Barri is the last descendant, in the main line, of the sister of Giraldus Cambrensis. The title is extinct with him, and the estates might be left by Rhyader to build a church if anything happened to Barri.’

‘I fancy—only fancy—this, Lord Festiniog. There must be some collateral branch, the representatives of which are unscrupulous.

Some conscientious person has found out what they aim at, and has warned you.'

'Man! man! there is *no* collateral branch. The head of the Barrys might try some wild claim, but he and all his family are pre-eminently respectable, and besides we have not been even related for three hundred years.'

'Some old charter may exist,' said George Drummond.

That answers itself. If that is the case, why was the claim not made on my accession, or why is it not made now?'

That seemed unanswerable. George Drummond resumed the conversation by saying:—

'Well, Lord Festiniog, I am deeply attached to Barri, and he to me. I will take him anywhere you like, and leave you and Lord Rhyader to solve the mystery, for I am fairly puzzled. Where shall we go?'

‘Take him to France and teach him the language, or indeed, anywhere you like. As for money, I find that.’

‘Will Lord Rhyader not object?’

‘Why no,’ said Lord Festiniog, rubbing his chin. ‘The fact is that Barri is too lively for them, when he is at home, and I fancy that they would not object to have him elsewhere. They have no vitality, and Barri has too much. There will be no difficulty there, particularly as I pay. Rhyader is a screw, and if he can give his boy a foreign tour for nothing, he is the very man to acquiesce. *She* won’t offer any opposition I warrant you. But mind that you and I are in entire confidence: not a word of what I have said to you must escape your mouth.’

‘You may trust me entirely,’ said George Drummond; and so the thing was settled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TUTOR AND PUPIL.

‘BARRI,’ said George to him as he met him at the door next morning, I want to speak to you very seriously ; what are you learning at school?’

Barri enumerated all human knowledge as given in the celebrated summary of Plato, and mentioned, moreover, French and German, in addition to the accomplishments of the ancient Greek philosophers :—the fact being, that he knew nothing, except how to ride, to swim, to row, and to fight, and even those things indifferently. He was not a fool, and tolerably diligent, but he had desired to be everything and was

nothing. Lord Festiniog said that he had got such a smattering of everything that he would make a most admirable third rate debater, and would consequently come to an evil end.

George walked with him along the street towards the Regent's Park, and insisted on speaking French to him. The boy could understand him after one or two repetitions, but he could not answer him.

'In your position,' said George, 'you ought, at least, to have French at your fingers' ends; and you can't talk it.'

'I could learn to talk it,' said Barri, 'if I went abroad.'

'Would you like to go abroad?' said George.

'Yes, I should, very much.'

'Would you like to go abroad with me?'

‘That would be too good a thing even to dream of,’ said Barri.

‘My boy, we all dream. I have dreamt a little too much, and my dream has not come true.’

‘Ay!’ said Barri: ‘you mean about Heloise: but you will dream about someone else some day and your dream will come most perfectly true.’

‘So you think, my child. But are you ready to come abroad with me?’

‘You are the only man I ever cared about,’ said Barri, ‘except, of course, my father and your father. But what is the use of talking about it? it cannot be done. Father would not mind: I don’t think that he can call his soul his own. Mamma would not mind very much, because I know she likes me to be away sometimes. She would be sorry if anything happened to me, but I

am not good company for her, as I know too well. Grandpa likes me and would never trust me out of his sight. He is lord and master, and he would never consent for an instant.'

'But Barri,' said George, 'he desires it.'

'All right,' said Barri, 'I have nothing more to say. If he chooses to make me happy, I shall offer no objection. I don't believe that pa is grandpa's son.'

'Why?'

'I don't know, they are so utterly different. Pa does not care so much about me as grandpapa does.'

'Well, you are not a very easy subject, Barri. You are very rude.'

'Was I ever rude to you or grandpa?'

'No.'

'That was because you or grandpa were never rude to me. My father and mother

always are. Q. E. D. I should like to go abroad with you. You will be kind to me, will you not ?'

' Did you ever know me to be unkind ?'

' Why no : but you never can tell. We shall get more familiar, perhaps, and shall forget small civilities. I believe that my father and mother are devoted to one another, yet they are always quarrelling.'

' I don't think that you are right in saying that, Barri.'

' Well,' said the boy, misunderstanding him ; 'perhaps I am not. They never quarrel, but they often disagree. She is always ready to be down on him if he says or does anything wrong ; and he would, at times, resent it if he had the pluck. He has not, you know. I have. He is always at his books, and she hates his books : she can't understand them. It is all very well,' con-

tinued this young schoolboy, 'talking about marriage, but I consider that it is a mistake, myself. My father and mother would have been much better apart.'

'I should think so, or you would not have been born.'

'That is the kind of thing,' said Barri, 'that they say to one another, and in my presence too. I don't wonder at it. They have neither of them got anything to do, and so they quarrel. If they would both turn Turk together and defy the Pope, they would get on most excellently. But then, you see, they will not. They spend their lives in disagreeing about small things; if they could agree about one large one, there would be no happier couple in the world. I wish they would both turn Roman Catholics.'

'And why?'

'Because I would not, and then they

would have a point of agreement at my expense. I assure you, George Drummond, that I love them, but I do not think that they are very fond of me.'

'Now Barri, you must listen to me. You are coming away with me through Europe as my pupil, and you must obey me in every particular. You have got a little habit in your little head, which must be got rid of. I say *must*, and I will be obeyed, you mind *that*. You are a sharp boy, a most objectionable thing to begin with, and you will turn out to be a sharp man, a horror not to be contemplated. You are beginning badly. You know a vast deal more than you ought to. What you have said about your father and mother is very smart, but you ought never to have said it. It was not gentlemanly.'

Barri looked up in his face and said :—

‘Nobody likes me. I wish that someone would. I thought that you would. And I shan’t die for so many years: it seems hard that nobody should like me. Put it to yourself, George. I have done no harm, I have only spoken the truth, and yet I am alone in the world. Even you have gone from me. I have no one now. Yes, I have aunt Arnaud. I will go to her; ay, and there is grandpa too. Let me go to them.’

‘Won’t you stay with me, Barri?’ said George Drummond: ‘you say that you are alone. Is your loneliness to be compared with mine? I will be your slave if you like, but don’t leave me now, for I want a companion.’

The boy was puzzled. The mentor and tutor of five minutes before was, morally, at his feet. He could not understand the

matter at all, but his instinct told him what to say and to do.

‘George Drummond,’ he said, ‘be my friend and make a man of me. I will follow you anywhere, and do anything which you tell me. But you must not bully me. I have had too much of that, and am in rebellion. Go anywhere and I will follow you. You are the best friend I have ever made in my life. Take my hand, and let us go where you will.’

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFIDENCE BETWEEN MRS. ARNAUD AND
GEORGE DRUMMOND.

GEORGE DRUMMOND went about London that afternoon, making enquiries about steamboats, outfits, expenses, and so on. He arrived about nine before No. 17, without the wildest idea of any result in his head. He had been thinking continually about Barri, and had neglected to put his latch-key in its proper place, and so, when he arrived before the door he had to knock.

The door was opened by Rachel, who promptly informed him that Mrs. Arnaud desired to see him at once.

Why? Who could tell? He was so thoroughly puzzled by the day's pro-

ceedings, that he did not much care. But he had an instinct that a new mine was going to be exploded under his feet. He went into the back parlour, in which he understood that good lady was, and she saved him all trouble.

‘Mr. Drummond,’ she said, ‘*do* you know anything about this?’

‘My dear Mrs. Arnaud,’ he said, ‘you are the very woman I should have wished to speak to about this painful and I think absurd matter. You must hold me blameless.’

‘Undoubtedly. I never suspected you for an instant. The plot was executed before poor silly people, like you and myself, knew anything about it.’

‘Executed! Mrs. Arnaud. You are out of your mind. There is no fear as long as I am alive of such a thing happening.’

‘It is done, however,’ said Mrs. Arnaud.

‘Now, make your mind easy, my dear madam. Assassinations are more often talked of than done. Read history, and see how seldom they succeed. Out of my own reading I could give you ten instances, and by going to the London Library, I could give you twenty more. The boy is perfectly safe.’

‘I do not understand you, Mr. Drummond. Of what are you speaking?’

‘Why, of the proposed murder of Barri, of course. I fancied that you knew all about it, but I suppose I have let the cat out of the bag?’

‘The murder of Barri,’ said Mrs. Arnaud. ‘Have you been drinking, Mr. Drummond? No, I withdraw that enquiry, you never do. Who can possibly want to assassinate Barri?’

‘Oh ! no one,’ said George, ‘I was mad ; but I am not so now. Possibly you will tell me what is the matter ; I thought that you had a clue to something else. Now, go on.’

‘You were very much attracted by Heloise, were you not ?’

‘Certainly !’

‘She has been married to D’Arcy these four months. That is all.’

‘Exactly. Well, I have known that since the morning, and I am not dead.’

‘Who told you ?’

‘Lord Festiniog.’

‘Who told him ?’

‘They told him themselves, by the advice, I believe, of Rachel, who was their confidant.’

‘Hem !’ said Mrs. Arnaud. ‘Then she knew. Well, they are gone away now, and

so long as you are satisfied, of course I have nothing to say. You seem very easily satisfied. I hate being deceived, myself. Now, we naturally come to this ridiculous nonsense about the murder of Barri. What is it?’

‘I’ll be burned alive if I can tell you. There is no object for it. I have let out so much that I may be as well hung for a sheep as a lamb. Lord Festiniog believes in it, and has asked me to take the boy abroad. I am going to do so.’

Mrs. Arnaud bent her head down and remained in thought for some time. Once or twice, George Drummond said something, but she grew impatient with him. At last she said :—

‘I have the key to this somewhere, but I must find it. Take the boy abroad, and at once, and leave everything to me. If I

seem to do anything wrong, believe the best of me. I only desire to do right. I tell you, George Drummond, that I suspect that a certain woman, whom your father and I know, is at the bottom of all this. This comes with other things which I am utterly unable to understand. I only suspect an entire impossibility. Mind, I will never injure your father, only, I will do my duty by the family which has, on the whole, treated me so kindly and so well. Meanwhile kiss me, George Drummond, for your own mother never could have loved you better than I do.'

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. ARNAUD TELLS A LIE TO DRUMMOND.

GEORGE and Barri went away to do the tour of the continent, together, and No. 17 saw them no more. D'Arcy and Heloise were gone, and Mrs. Arnaud was left alone with Rachel.

She had never been so much alone before. Rachel, 'excellent woman,' was no company to her, for Mrs. Arnaud thought she had been deceived by her in the matter of D'Arcy's marriage; and, besides, she was not a woman who could talk to servants. In her old semi-religious life she had always

had someone to talk to, and to confide in : now, she had no one except Lord Festiniog. She was even deprived of him now, for a change of ministry occurred, and he was, to his own astonishment, and that of the world, asked to take a rather high position. He came to her one night and told her that he did not think they would last a month : ‘fancy,’ he said, ‘putting me in office, and passing over Rhyader. I don’t know anything about it. I can speak a little ; but I never attended to politics. I suppose you see that James Drummond is going into parliament : that is a new idea. Have you seen him ?’

‘Why no,’ said Mrs. Arnaud, ‘his election has made him very busy. I shall see him in a day or two. Any news from Barri, and his son ?’

‘Yes, nothing but good, they seem to

get on charmingly together, and they are going to the South of Italy.'

'I will get their address, and write to George Drummond. He might go and see my poor child's grave at Ravenna.'

'Well thought of, Mary, but I won't have the boy taken there. It is an unhealthy hole of a place.'

'I hate the name of it,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'but George Drummond would, I know, go there and lay a wreath on the little child's breast.'

'Surely he would. By the bye, that woman who was with you there, is now living with Drummond as his house-keeper.'

'Is she? I do not care to see her. She recalls the most miserable time of my life. Yet, I liked her, too, she was very kind to me.'

‘If you go to see him you will have to see her, but I wish you would go.’

‘It shall be done.’ And so they separated.

Drummond had now taken a furnished house in Wilton Crescent for a year, as befitted a member of parliament. He also had an establishment corresponding to the house; and so when Mrs. Arnaud knocked at his door one Sunday afternoon, she was admitted by a butler, with a footman to match, and saw nothing of the dreaded housekeeper.

He thought that it was some other person, and came out of the dining room into the hall, before they had time to shew her into the drawing room. He said ‘good heavens,’ and she went into the dining room before him.

His lunch was not cleared away, and

there was a decanter three quarters empty by his plate. She had a dim suspicion that he had been sitting there, alone, drinking. She did not see any signs of it in his manner, but still she thought so. She said at once, 'You and I are old acquaintance enough to allow me a liberty, Drummond. As we are alone, let me have a glass of wine.'

'Bring some sherry at once for Mrs. Arnaud,' he said to the butler.

'Nay, I will take some of what you have there,' she said.

'Bring the brown sherry directly, and don't stand staring there,' was his answer to the butler, who went away.

'Sit down, Mrs. Arnaud, I cannot tell you the pleasure I have in seeing you.'

'Drummond,' she said, sitting down, 'that is brandy that you are drinking, and there is not a drop of water on the table.'

I don't want any wine ; I only asked for i to enable me to let you know that I see what you drink.'

'Why should I not drink brandy?' he said coolly, sitting opposite to her. 'I have nothing left to live for in the world.'

'Your son.'

'Oh, that fellow. Yes, but he would be better off if I was dead, would he not ?

'There are a few friends who care enough about you, still, to be sorry to see you drink.'

'Do you care about me, then?'

'I do, indeed, I assure you that I do. I think you used me ill once, but I have forgotten that. I think you behaved like a bad man to me in saying what you did, when you were married.'

'I was not married at that time, Mary.'

‘ My good friend, you know that you were.’

‘ I will swear that I was not, though, and I will swear that I was never married in my life.’

‘ That only makes matters worse then ; but I have not come here to discuss your private affairs. I come to consult you.’

‘ As a friend ?’

‘ Scarcely as an enemy, or I should not be here at all.’

‘ Can I ever be more than a friend to you, Mary ?’

She let him call her so ; she did worse ; she did what never could be excused ; she said :—

‘ It is not a time to talk about that. I do not say but that it might be possible in the future.’

What were her motives in telling such a

falsehood? She had as much idea of marrying the man as she had of marrying Lord Festiniog. Her motives were not high, we fear. She liked being admired by the man; she liked to see her power over him; and her curiosity was strong. She suspected that he knew something which she desired to know, or that, at all events he could find it out for her, and so oblige Lord Festiniog whom she liked very much: there was simply no other motive for her leading the wretched man on. And yet, the usual tenor of that woman's life had been before, and was again, perfectly truthful and loyal.

‘I will die for you, Mary, if you choose.’

‘I do not desire that, I want your advice and your assistance, that is all.’

‘They are freely given. May I kiss your hand?’

She thought, and said, 'No.'

'That will be for the future I hope,' he said. 'Now, let me know what you wish.'

'Well then, Lord Festiniog seems to me a little mad.'

'Well, he will make a good mess in office, but he is certainly sane.'

'Well, you know best. He says that someone wants to kill Barri, and that is why he has sent him away with George.'

'That is very odd,' he said, looking straight at her. 'Who, on earth, could possibly want to kill the boy?'

'I thought that you might find out,' she said.

'Do *you* wish it found out?' said he.

'I do, very much. Can you find it out if you choose?'

'My dear Mary, all things can be found out if people choose to give information. If

I find this out, shall I stand more highly
with you?'

'Indeed you would, but I commit myself
to nothing.'

'Not at all. I will go to work.'

'I thank you.' And so she went.

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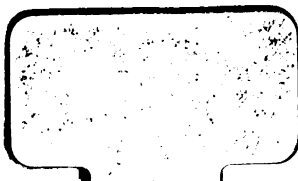
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